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Lei Liang  
composer

# “Hauntingly beautiful and sonically colorful”

Vivien Schweitzer (The New York Times)

Lei Liang (b.1972) is a Chinese-born American composer whose orchestral, chamber and stage works have been performed throughout the world. Winner of the 2011 Rome Prize, Lei Liang is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Aaron Copland Award. He was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert for the inaugural concert of the CONTACT! new music series. Other commissions and performances come from the Taipei Chinese Orchestra, the Heidelberger Philharmonisches Orchester, pipa virtuoso Wu Man, the Fromm Music Foundation, Meet the Composer, Chamber Music America, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Manhattan Sinfonietta, the Arditti Quartet, Shanghai Quartet, the Meridian Arts Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, New York New Music Ensemble and Boston Musica Viva. Lei Liang's select music is published by Schott Music Corporation, and recorded on Telarc, Mode, New World, Innova, GM, Einstein and Naxos (forthcoming) Records. As a scholar, he is active in the research and preservation of traditional Asian music.



Lei Liang studied composition with Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Robert Cogan, Chaya Czernowin, and Mario Davidovsky, and received degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music (BM and MM) and Harvard University (PhD). A Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum, he held fellowships from Harvard Society of Fellows and the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships. He taught in China as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Shaanxi Normal University College of Arts in Xi'an; served as Honorary Professor of Composition and Sound Design at Wuhan Conservatory of Music and as Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Middlebury College. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego.

“Far, far out of the ordinary...**brilliantly original and inarguably gorgeous**”

(The Washington Post)

## Selected Awards:

- Elliott Carter Rome Prize (2011)
- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2009-10)
- MAP Fund (2011)
- Aaron Copland Recording Grants (2009, 2010)
- Alice M. Ditson Fund, Columbia University (2010, 2011)
- Meet the Composer / Commissioning Music USA (2009)
- Chamber Music America Commission (2009)
- Aaron Copland Award (2008)
- Fondazione William Walton Residency Award (2008)
- Fromm Music Foundation (2007)
- The George Arthur Knight Prize, Harvard University (2006)
- Heinrich Strobel Foundation bursary from the South West German Radio Experimentalstudio (2004)
- The George Whitefield Chadwick Medal, the New England Conservatory of Music (1996)
- Ten Persons of the Year, Beijing Youth Daily (1989)



“One of **the most exciting voices** in New Music” (The Wire)

## Press Quotes:

"Lei Liang is the most interesting member of the Chinese new wave, of whom Tan Dun is the best known. These pieces are theatrical, engaging yet intensely thoughtful...A deeply personal art of memory."

- **Andy Hamilton, *The Wire* (UK)**

"What raised the evening [Shanghai Quartet and pipa superstar Wu Man at Freer Gallery] out of the ordinary - far, far out of the ordinary - was composer Lei Liang, who brought pipa and quartet together in a work so brilliantly original and inarguably gorgeous that the two may never be the same...Liang's 'Five Seasons,' a sonic tour de force from a composer not yet 40."

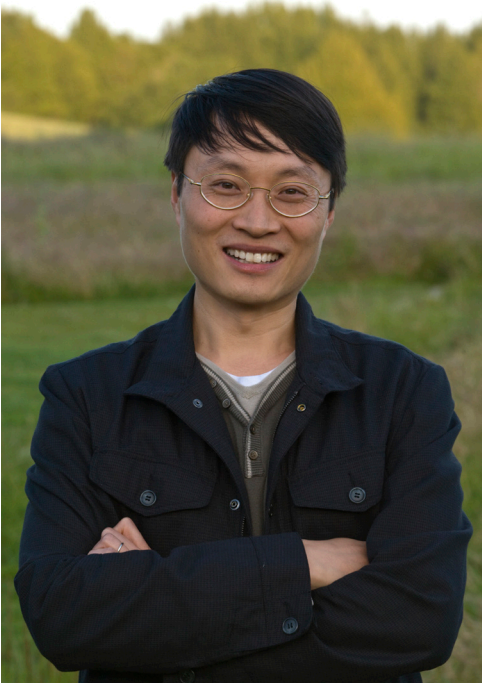
- **Stephen Brookes, *The Washington Post***

"A highlight [of New York Philharmonic's Contact!] was Lei Liang's *Verge* for 18 strings. With musicians divided into four sections arranged spatially across the stage, Liang builds on the concept of lines converging and diverging across several sections."

- **Brian Wise, *The Strad***

"Lei Liang's *Yuan* [for saxophone quartet] is a 15-minute tour de force: a dense example of profound cross-culturalism."

- **James M. Keller, *Chamber Music***



"Liang is particularly interested in the Beijing opera, guqin (ancient Chinese seven-string zither) and Mongolian music. However, he carefully refrains from incorporating exoticized Chinese elements into his compositions. Describing himself as a composer who "conceives music as a way to free one's imagination from the artificial confines of cultural identities," Liang aims at a deeper philosophical engagement with musical cultures that transcends reductive nationalistic categories."

- **Professor Edward Green, *The Grove Dictionary of American Music* (Oxford University Press)**

"One of the most exciting voices in New Music, Lei Liang strips cultural identity of nationalistic, and even hemispheric, agenda. Lei Liang is an important musical philosopher, coming into mature expression."

- **Brian Morton, *The Wire* (UK)**

"Lei Liang's *Gobi Gloria*...reveal a conscious blending of sounds, techniques and ideas from traditional Chinese music with the string quartet of the Western classical tradition. This delightful and innovative music brings a fresh perspective, suggesting intriguing possibilities for the future of the string quartet."

- **New Classics, *Chamber Music* (UK)**

"Lei Liang is a composer with a remarkable poetic sensibility."

- **ASCAP**

"Underneath Liang's exquisite and unadorned melodies, there is a wealth of timbral nuances...During a time when most contemporary music seems to alienate the audience, such elegant and tranquil music surprises and refreshes the listeners."

- **Ban Lixia, *Renmin Yinyue* [People's Music: Review] (China)**

## Selected Works:

### Orchestral

- Brush-Stroke, small orchestra (15 players), 2004
- Harp Concerto, harp solo and chamber orchestra (15 players), 2008
- Saxophone Concerto "Xiaoxiang", alto saxophone and orchestra, 2009
- Verge, for 18 solo strings, 2009
- Tremors of a Memory Chord, piano and grand Chinese orchestra, 2011

### Chamber Music

- Feng, cello, 1998 (also version for violin, 2000)
- Lake, 2 flutes, 1999 (also version for flute, clarinet, 2004)
- Milou, soprano saxophone, 4 alto saxophones, baritone saxophone, electric guitar, piano, harpsichord, 4 percussion (2 around hall), 1999
- Parts for a Floating Space, soprano saxophone (+ baritone saxophone), percussion, 2001
- Trio, cello, piano, percussion, 2002
- Gobi Polyphony, erhu, cello, 2003
- Gobi Canticle, violin, cello, 2004
- Motion Parallel, sheng, guanzi, 2004
- In Praise of Shadows, flute, 2005
- Serashi Fragments, string quartet, 2005
- Gobi Gloria, string quartet, 2006
- Ascension, brass quintet, percussion, 2008
- Yuan, saxophone quartet, 2008
- A Journey into Desire, guitar solo, 2009
- Five Seasons, pipa, string quartet, 2010
- Aural Hypothesis, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, vibraphone, 2010



### Piano

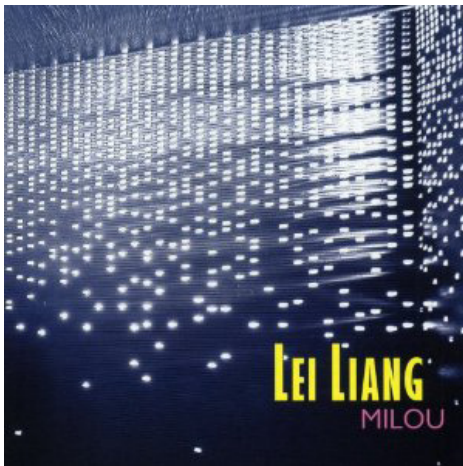
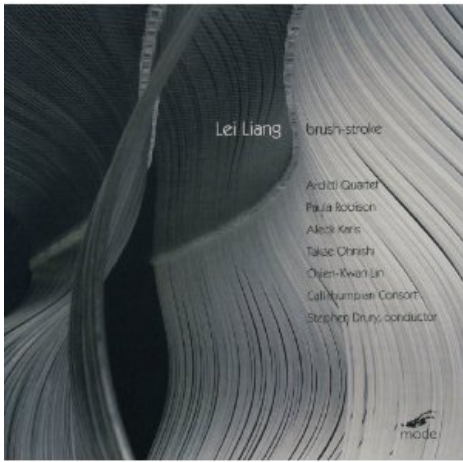
- Garden Eight, 1996
- Against Piano, piano (2 players, one inside piano), 1999
- My Windows (in four movements: Tian, Seven Rays of the Sun, Magma, and Pausing, Awaiting the Wind to Rise...), 1996-2007

### Harpsichord

- Some Empty Thoughts of a Person from Edo, 2001

### Electroacoustic

- Memories of Xiaoxiang, alto saxophone, 4-track tape, 2003 (concert version of stage work)



## Commissions and Performances by:

- The New York Philharmonic, Boston Modern Music Project, Taipei Chinese Orchestra, Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, Heidelberger Philharmonisches Orchester, Manhattan Sinfonietta
- Arditti Quartet, JACK Quartet, PRISM Quartet, Shanghai Quartet, Ying Quartet, Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, New York New Music Ensemble, Argento Chamber Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Continuum Ensemble, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Boston Musica Viva, Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble, Callithumpian Consort, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, ALEA III, Ensemble Courage, Grenzenlos, North/South Chamber Orchestra, Verge Ensemble, Southwest Chamber Music Ensemble, St. Petersburg String Quartet
- Wu Man (pipa), Steven Schick, Paula Robison, Lawrence Lesser, Masuko Ushioda, Pi-Hsien Chen, Aleck Karis, Stephen Gosling, Eric Huebner, Kenneth Radnofsky, John Sampen, Stephen Drury, June Han, Chien-Kwan Lin, Pablo Gómez

## Solo Albums (with reviews):

**Lei Liang: Brush-Stroke** (Mode Records), featuring Arditti Quartet, Paula Robison, Aleck Karis, Callithumpian Consort

“Lei Liang’s music transcends nationalism. This disc embraces a broad vision of attributes that are quintessential to Asia, encompassing those of Japan, China, and Mongolia.”

□ **Kazushi Ishida, *The Record Geijutsu [Japan]***

“I do not know any other Chinese composer capable of embracing his past from a global and transcendental perspective, overcoming outdated watertight compartments, understanding today’s music as a free space where, with the aid of talent, everything can be made fit.”

□ **Ismael G. Cabral, *Chorro de luz [Spain]***

**Lei Liang: Milou** (New World Records), featuring Manhattan Sinfonietta, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Radnofsky Quartet

“Resolutely modern and original...For those inclined to excitement and stimulation in their music making, his is an important young voice.”

□ **Peter Burwasser, *Fanfare Magazine***

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