

# SUNRISE MEDITATIONS

FRIDAY, JULY 21 | 5:15 AM | CHINESE TEA HOUSE

Lun Li, violin

Ariel Horowitz, violin

Edwin Kaplan, viola

Titilayo Ayangade, cello

---

CASALS

*Song of the Birds*

(Approximate duration 3 minutes)

LEI LIANG

*Gobi Canticle*

(Approximate duration 10 minutes)

ALEXIS ROLAND-MANUEL

*String Trio in A Major*

(Approximate duration 18 minutes)

PAUL WIANCKO

*American Haiku*

(Approximate duration 10 minutes)

KORNGOLD

*String Quartet No. 2, Op. 26*

(Approximate duration 24 minutes)

---

## Pablo Casals (1876-1973): *Song of the Birds*

Pablo Casals was one of the most influential musicians of the 20th century. Cellist, conductor, composer, humanist and staunch fighter for freedom and democracy, his legacy makes him one of the most widely recognized names in music and peace.

At the age of twenty-three he enjoyed success in Paris at the hands of the great conductor Charles Lamoureux, beginning a brilliant career as a soloist that led him to play in the best concert halls in the world. In 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War, he moved to New York where he continued his concert tours.

In 1919 he returned to Barcelona and founded the Pau Casals Orchestra, which he conducted until 1936. With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's victory in 1939, he fled to Prades, France, where he spent the first years in exile, and from 1957 onwards he lived in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he died in 1973, at the age of ninety-six. In November 1979, with the return of democratic institutions and in accordance with his wishes, his remains were transferred to the cemetery in his hometown of El Vendrell.

The *Song of the Birds*, played by Pablo Casals in 1971, was based on a haunting and melancholy folk tune of his native Catalonia. Casals had experienced the horrors of both world wars, and this piece embodied the cello virtuoso's prayers for peace. When performing it before the

United Nations General Assembly toward the end of his life, he stood up and said, "Birds in Catalonia go singing: Peace, peace, peace." I remember watching a video recording of this scene.

## **Lei Liang (b. 1972): Gobi Canticle**

Lei Liang is a Chinese-born American composer whose works have been described as "*hauntingly beautiful and sonically colorful*" by The New York Times, and as "*far, far out of the ordinary, brilliantly original and inarguably gorgeous*" by The Washington Post. Winner of the 2011 Rome Prize, Lei Liang is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Aaron Copland Award, a Koussevitzky Music Foundation Commission, a Creative Capital Award, and the Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His concerto *Xiaoxiang* (for saxophone and orchestra) was named a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in 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). He is Chancellor's Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego where he served as chair of the composition area and Acting Chair of the Music Department. Starting from 2018, Lei Liang serves as the Artistic Director of the Chou Wen-chung Music Research Center in China. Lei Liang's catalogue of more than a hundred compositions is published exclusively by Schott Music Corporation (New York).

*Gobi Canticle* belongs to a series of compositions that grew out of my admiration for Mongolian music. Its melodic material is based on the theme of Gobi Polyphony – a work commissioned and premiered by the erhu player Xu Ke at the Música Nova Festival in Helsinki in 2003. In this composition, the melody is played against its own inversion; it then alludes to various genres of Mongolian music that include the long-chant, as well as the music of dance and shaman rituals. It concludes with a rendering of a folk song that I learnt during my visit to the Nei Monggol region in 1996.

## **Alexis Roland-Manuel (1891-1966): String Trio in A Major**

Alexis Roland-Manuel was a French composer and critic, recalled today mainly for his critical comments. Born in Paris to a family of Belgian and Jewish origins, he studied composition under Vincent d'Indy and Albert Roussel. When a young man he befriended composer Erik Satie, who facilitated his making various influential musical connections. In 1911, Satie introduced Roland-Manuel to Maurice Ravel, whose pupil, friend, and biographer he soon became. In 1947, he was appointed Professor of Aesthetics at the Conservatoire de Paris, where he remained until his retirement in 1961, making many contributions to musical theory and criticism, including assisting Igor Stravinsky by ghost-writing the theoretical work "The Poetics of Music."

As well as theoretical works, he wrote and composed various works for stage (especially comic operas) and screen, developing a partnership with director Jean Grémillon, composing the scores for five of his films. Roland-Manuel's criticism included several papers on the music of Ravel from the viewpoint of a considerate pupil and a lifetime friend. The titles include "Ravel", "Ravel et son oeuvre", and "Ravel et son oeuvre dramatique." Arthur Honegger dedicated *Pastorale d'été* to Roland-Manuel. He died in Paris in 1966.

The composition is suggestive of Ravel in many ways but even so is still different: the organizational form for the trio is more polyphonic than is normal for Roland-Manuel, and he treats Classical styles in a looser manner. For example, the second theme reoccurs before the

recapitulation of the sonata form first movement. Listen to how this makes the whole structure into a palindrome. The Sarabande has a swinging quality but evokes a song rather than a dance, and the piece concludes with a feisty, refreshing rondo.

## Paul Wiancko (b.1983): American Haiku

Paul Wiancko is an acclaimed composer and cellist. *The Washington Post* describes Wiancko as “a restless and multifaceted talent who plays well with others”—a reference to his substantial collaborations with artists including Max Richter, Chick Corea, Norah Jones, Arcade Fire, and The National. “Even with this chronically collaborative spirit,” the Post continues, “Wiancko maintains a singular voice as a composer.”

Wiancko’s own music has been described as everything from “dazzling” and “compelling” (*Star Tribune*) to “joyous, riotous” and “delicate” (*NY Times*). *NPR* writes, “If Haydn were alive to write a string quartet today, it may sound something like Paul Wiancko’s *LIFT*”—a work that “teems with understanding of and affection for the string-quartet tradition” (*NY Times*) and is featured on the Aizuri Quartet’s Grammy-nominated album, *Blueprinting*.

It could be said that Paul Wiancko’s fascination with haiku runs in the family. His father, while working as a filmmaker in Japan, became fascinated with the Haiku form, and believed that no Haiku had ever been accurately translated into English. The 5-7-5 syllabic meter was, in his eyes, too simplistic for the deeply emotional nature of authentic Japanese Haiku in which each character could have multiple meanings. A single Japanese Haiku could be a treatise on life itself. After seeking to write a book translating Haiku, Wiancko senior met Wiancko’s mother, a Japanese woman who helped him in the process of translating the poetry. Later, growing up in California, Paul Wiancko’s Japanese American heritage became increasingly important to him as he grew both as a man and musician. Wiancko was enchanted with traditional Appalachian music as well as Japanese folk music.

His *American Haiku* is an attempt to reconcile these vastly different esthetics: an effortless fusion of the broad earthiness that is Appalachian music, with the tender, sparse rhythms of Japanese folk song. What he found is that these two seemingly disparate styles blend seamlessly. Both draw their roots from the natural world.

*American Haiku* offers its listener an elegant *rapprochement* of two cultures all the while delving into the emotional depths of the three-part Haiku in its three movements: I. Far away, II. In Transit, III. Home. Each movement brings with it percussive rhythms coupled with rich, spacious chords recalling vast, rugged mountain ranges over intricate plucky melodies. The blending of viola and cello also play a crucial role in the composition’s harmoniousness, with the cello and viola overlapping in range and texture allowing the viola to weave poignant melodies over the cello’s foundation. In many ways, *American Haiku* is a treatise on the life of Wiancko and his journey into his own roots, showing that the universal language of music is perhaps the clearest way to translate the depths of Haiku.

## Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957): String Quartet No. 2, Op. 26

In 1933, the year when the present quartet was written, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, age 36, could look back on a full quarter of a century in the limelight. It was exactly twenty-five years since he had signed a contract with Universal Editions in Vienna for the publication of his earliest works—or rather, his father had signed for him, since the signature of an 11-year-old would not have had the required legal force. His father, Dr. Julius Korngold, by the way, happened to be Vienna’s most influential music critic, which no doubt helped the young prodigy’s spectacular

rise to fame, but also proved to be a mixed blessing in the years to come.

As prodigies go, Korngold was unique in that he not only displayed exceptional talent but had mastered all the intricacies of a late Romantic musical idiom before he entered his teens. (He had a much more complex language to absorb than Mozart had to do in the 18th century.) Within a few years, he was celebrated all over Germany, and his opera *Die tote Stadt* ("The Dead City") reached the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1921 (when the composer was still only 24). Yet it wasn't long before professional challenges began to appear on Korngold's horizon. Some of them came from a composer who was old enough to be his father. Arnold Schoenberg's latest compositions, using the twelve-tone method, divided musical opinion in Vienna, dividing musicians into two camps, with Korngold one of the most prominent anti-serialists. In many of his works from the 1920s and '30s, Korngold set out to prove that one could still say something new and meaningful without giving up on tonality.

The Second Quartet was premiered in 1933 by Vienna's premier quartet group, the Rosé Quartet, which had celebrated the 50th anniversary of its concert debut the year before. (The founder and first violinist Arnold Rosé, who had worked with Brahms and had been Mahler's brother-in-law, was the only member who remained in the group for the entire 55 years of its existence.) Although the quartet begins and ends firmly in E-flat major and the C-major tonality of the second movement is also quite clear, the slow third movement is mainly in C-sharp major but moves freely and unpredictably from key to key throughout. Korngold, while rejecting the most radical innovations of his time, still stretched the boundaries of tonality in his own way, and if his language is traditional, the quartet could never be mistaken for a 19th-century composer's work. Classical chords are liberally sprinkled with extra notes that make them dissonant, and Korngold particularly enjoyed juxtaposing post-Wagnerian chromatic harmonies with deliberately simple, popular-sounding moments, especially in the second movement intermezzo and the gorgeous waltz-fantasy that serves as the finale. (It should be remembered that Korngold was a noted authority on Johann Strauss, Jr., whose works he frequently arranged and conducted.)

The greatest surprises await us in the slow movement, which stands in third place: this "Larghetto" opens with a series of otherworldly harmonic chords introducing the movement's lush principal melody. Soon after the premiere of the Second Quartet, Korngold departed for the United States for his first Hollywood job, an arrangement of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music for the great director Max Reinhardt. And although this was not yet the final emigration (which didn't take place until 1938), it was clearly the beginning of a new life for the composer. The Second Quartet is, therefore, one of Korngold's last European works and, in a way, a summation of the first half of his brilliant career.

---

**Festival Artist Biographies can be found on page 124.**