

FROM THE PATH OF BEAUTY is a seven-movement song cycle for mixed choir and string quartet. The first movement is for choir or vocal quartet, there are two movements for string quartet alone, and the other four movements are for choir with string quartet.

Commissioned by Chanticleer and the Shanghai Quartet for the celebration of their 30th and 25th anniversaries, the work was premiered on March 13, 2008 in San Francisco. The New York premiere followed on April 11, 2008 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This composition is dedicated to Mr. Peter Henschel and Mr. Gordon Lau, honoring their great devotion and contribution to the friendship between the San Francisco Bay Area and China, with a high hope of improving the cultural understanding between our two countries and the peace of the world.

This four-movement string quartet version was co-commissioned by and premiered at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, by the Shanghai Quartet in Washington, DC on April 23, 2008. The string quartet version uses four of the original seven movements in the revised order shown below:

- I. The Bronze Taotie (originally I.)
- II. The Rhymed Poems (originally IV.)
- III. The Secluded Melody (originally VI.)
- IV. The Dancing Ink (originally II.)

FROM THE PATH OF BEAUTY brings us through the history of beauty in Chinese arts, from ancient totems to figurines, from poetry to calligraphy, from dance to music, from thoughts to the spirit. It is deep in expression and rich in color, lyrical yet dramatic. The string quartet plays in non-traditional textures, such as the dark and dense blocks of moving chords with contrast of harmonic tones in the first movement (*The Bronze Taotie*, inspired by the bronze taotie from the Shang dynasty, c.1600-c.1100 B.C.), and the musical imitation of Chinese operatic reciting in the next movement (*The Rhymed Poems*, an instrumental realization of reading two poems by Li Qingzhao from the Song Dynasty, [960-1279] in Mandarin). The following movement (*The Secluded Melody*) is the polyphonic development of pitch material drawn from the qin (a 7-string ancient Chinese zither) music "Secluded Orchid in the Mode of Jie Shi" from the Six Dynasties period (497-590). In the last movement (*The Dancing Ink*), the strings have woodwind-like running passages, representing the exaggerated shapes and gestures in Chinese cursive from the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

The texts inspiring *The Rhymed Poems* follow:

As in a Dream, two poems by Li Qingzhao (Song Dynasty, 960-1279)
(English translation by Chen Yi)

I.
I remember many times/We were in the sunset/At the pavilion by the rivulet,/Got drunk and lost our way back./Returned by boat after thoroughly enjoying ourselves,/By mistake we went into the recesses of the clusters of lotus./Paddled by bending to the oars,/Roused the gulls and egrets to flight/From the sand bars.

II.
Last night fine rain, gusts of wind,/Deep sleep could not dissolve the leftover wine./I asked the person who was rolling up my curtains,/The answer was: "The begonias are still the same."/ "Don't you know? Don't you know it is time/For the green to flourish and the red to wither?"

FROM THE PATH OF BEAUTY has three performance options:

Complete seven-movement cycle for chorus and string quartet (on rental)

Four-movement version for string quartet (published 114-41367)

The Bronze Taotie single movement, for S.A.T.B. Chorus, a cappella (published 312-41853)