



IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Singapore

2011 Pulitzer winner Dr. Zhou Long to present his winning work at NAFA Symposium

Visiting Professor of Composition at University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music, USA, Dr. Zhou Long has received numerous awards and gained international recognition for his unique body of music that brings together the aesthetic concepts and musical elements of East and West.

Most recently, he was awarded the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Music for his debut opera, *Madame White Snake* which was premiered by the Boston Opera in February 2010. Incidentally, the opera is the subject of his paper presentation at NAFA Symposium 2011, "*Imagination Between Ancient and Modern: Composing A New Opera on a Legend.*"

The judges of the award have hailed the opera as "a work that synthesizes ancient and modern, East and West, blending Asian timbres, instruments and musical traditions into a Western musical fabric in ways that transcend mere local colour to become deeply expressive in their own right."

The opera marked many firsts:

- First English libretto based on the legendary Chinese folklore classic, *Madame White Snake*
- Debut of librettist Cerise Lim Jacobs.
- Opera Boston's first major commissioned work.
- First collaboration between the Beijing Music Festival and an American opera company.
- First time Opera Boston has taken a production to another country.

Other highlights of the opera:

- A male soprano featured as narrator throughout the opera.
- A children's choir is used as interludes between acts

Dr. Zhou said, “The common questions asked to a composer who is working on a new opera are often regarding the musical and dramatic styles. The answers can be tricky. In general, my composition style is lyrical and complex. Actually, it's a question of whether there is a memorable aria in a new opera, or, is it musically abstract? It's complicated to decide what kind of musical and dramatic styles to be used in a new opera based on a legend. However, on the other hand, comparing with historical drama, the legend would give more freedom and space to use your imagination. One thing is for sure - there must be a synergy between the compositional style and the vocal characters.”

In this opera, Dr. Zhou illustrates a culture or milieu in some way foreign to the potential Western audience. As he explained in his paper abstract, “The meaning of “exotic,” especially as used for Western music, often depends not just on the musical notes but also on the character's mould and performance media, particularly the musical and cultural preparation of a given audience. The musical exoticism may not be contained in specific devices, such as direct quotations on Peking Opera or surfaced folk custom vaudeville as some new operas often are trying to do. Instead, it should be contained through an interaction between exotic environments and individual characters in the opera. However, this opera, for the Chinese audience, could be “exotic” for them as they may already be familiar with the *Madame White Snake* legend. In this circumstance, I made sure I composed entirely, or even consistently, of elements that would be identified as both Western and Eastern cultures, to sate both audiences' expectations.”

About Dr. Zhou Long

He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from Columbia University where his mentors included Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, and George Edwards.

His academic teaching has brought him to many institutions in the U.S such as Duke University, Cornell University, Columbia University, Indiana University at Bloomington, UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, San Francisco State University, the San Francisco Conservatory, the Manhattan School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory and the Curtis Institute of Music.

The prolific artist has received numerous awards, grants and fellowships from various institutions around the world, one of which is a lifetime achievement award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters at the 2003 Academy Award in Music. As music director of Music from China in New York City, he also received ASCAP's prestigious Adventurous Programming Award in 1999. The Pulitzer Prize in Music was awarded to Dr. Zhou Long for his opera, *Madame White Snake* in April 2011.

About NAFA Symposium

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) will be hosting the second NAFA Symposium from 19 to 21 September 2011. Titled, 'New Asian Imaginations: (Re)Searching the Arts in Southeast Asia', this symposium seeks to highlight new insights emerging between research and artistic practices. From visual arts to performing arts, from design to filmmaking, from theory to practice, from history to contemporary culture, international arts academics, practitioners and professionals will gather in Singapore for discussions on the arts in Southeast Asia. The first symposium was held in 2008 in conjunction with the academy's 70th anniversary. Full symposium access, including opening performances, lunches and coffee breaks, is at S\$350. Early registrants pay S\$180 (valid till 31 May 2011). For more information and registration, go to <http://newasianimaginations.nafa.edu.sg/>

Guest of Honour: **Professor Kishore Mahbubani**, Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS

Keynote speaker: **Professor Nikos Papastergiadis**, Professor, Cultural Studies and Media & Communications, The University of Melbourne, Australia

Invited speakers:

Ark Fongsmut, Curator, Bangkok University Gallery, Consultant Lecturer, Mahidol University, Silpakorn University, Thammasat University, Thailand

Professor Marsha Meskimmon, Professor, University of Loughborough, UK

Tan Pin Pin, Award-winning Filmmaker, Singapore

Dr. Zhou Long, Visiting Professor of Composition, University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music, USA

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