

Ambush! 十面埋伏

An Instrumental Musical by Chai Found Music Workshop



Ambush! is an "Instrumental Musical" by one of the world's finest Chinese music groups: Chai Found Music Workshop from Taipei/Taiwan. Being their biggest and most successful production so far, Ambush! is a feast for the ears and eyes of everybody who is curious about Chinese culture.

Ambush! is an outstanding and impressive combination of music, choreography, and drama. A categorization for Ambush! is not easily made. The term "Choreographed Eastern Instrumental Music Drama" maybe comes closest.



The 90 minute long show combines the following elements:

- A sequence of 9 music pieces played solely on traditional Chinese instruments.
- Precisely choreographed movements of all the musicians and performers.
- Drama elements displaying the personalities of the story's main characters.
- Colorful costumes inspired by ancient Chinese clothing styles.
- Stage and lighting design supporting the action.
- A state-of-the-art sound design delivering all nuances of sound.

The music for Ambush! was composed, arranged, and directed by Huang Zhengming, the leader of Chai Found Music Workshop. His score is dynamic and dramatic, while at the same time featuring catchy melodies and experimental musical textures. Shades from Symphonic Music, Eastern Pop and Folk, Western Avant-garde, and even Funk and Rock can be traced. Most significantly though, Ambush! is deeply rooted in Traditional Chinese Music.

The 27 members of Chai Found Music Workshop perform Ambush! on the Yangqin (Chinese dulcimer), the Erhu (two-stringed Chinese Fiddle), the Guzheng (Chinese Zither), the Pipa (Chinese Lute), the Di (Chinese Bamboo Flute), the Ruan (Chinese Banjo), and the Suona (Chinese Oboe). The composer added various percussions and drums to support the dramatic quality of the story.



Ambush! had its premiere in November 2005. Since then, it has been performed in front of sold out houses throughout Taiwan. It was broadly covered by most local and national Taiwanese media, with reactions ranging from positive to enthusiastic. National Taiwan Television filmed the event and will release a DVD.

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The Story behind Ambush!



Ambush! draws from episodes in Chinese history which date back as far as 200 BC. Ambush! refers to several famous incidents of the Chu-Han War, which are common knowledge in Chinese culture. Ambush! illustrates – by means of music - the struggle for power between the two warlords Xiang Yu, supported by his concubine Yu Ji, and Liu Bang, who was later to become the first emperor of the Han Dynasty.

Rather than explaining them, the historical events are illustrated by means of music and movement. The composer and the ensemble have tried to bring out the underlying emotions: betrayal, deception, cruelty, but also the love and affection in the relationship of one of the most famous couples in Chinese history: Yu Ji and Xiang Yu. Numerous plays in Chinese Opera, as well as movies and literature have also drawn from those sources.



After the fall of the Qin Dynasty in 206 BC, an immensely cruel 5-year war broke out between several kings, rebels, and warlords. Soon it turned into a conflict between the Chu under their leader Xiang Yu, and the Han under Liu Bang. Both sides had the same goal: to unify and rule China. Liu Bang, who came from a peasant family, was inferior as a soldier, but by far better in taking advice and in finding the right allies. Xiang Yu, a nobleman and ingenious general with little sense for political tactics, was feared for his impetuous character - and infamous for his kindness towards women, particularly his concubine and female companion Yu Ji. After he had been lucky on the battlefield in the beginning, his fortune turned, and the rogueries of his sly enemy finally broke his back.

The highlight of the show is the piece Shi Mian Mai Fu. This translates as "Ambush from Ten Sides", an idiom for a hopeless situation with no way out. Originally written for solo pipa, it shows how the historical events connect with the performance: 7 pipa players are in a half-circle at the front of the stage, conducted only by the right hand of pipa player Lin Huikuan. The stage setting, the lighting design, the music arrangement, and the brilliant performance leave no doubt about the cruelty and fierceness of the last battle of the Chu-Han War.



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The Artists

Director, Composer: Huang Zhengming 黃正銘
Choreographers: Wang Lian 王立安, Liao Qiwei 廖淇偉
Visual Designer: Su Zongxiong 蘇宗雄
Costume Designer: Ren Shuqin 任淑琴
Technical Director: Zheng Guoyang 鄭國揚
Video Directors: Wu Makui 吳馬奎, Gu Jianmin 顧建民

The Performers:

Pipa (Chinese Lute) 琵琶:

Lin Huikuan 林慧寬, Liang Yanping 梁燕萍, Su Meiyu 蘇美諭,
Lin Junfan 林軍汎, Peng Qunjie 彭群傑, Lian Peiru 連珮如,
Lu Peizhen 呂珮禎

Di (Chinese Flute) 笛:

Wu Zongxian 吳宗憲, Wu Yahui 吳雅慧

Di (Chinese Flute) 笛, Percussion 打擊:

Zheng Yutong 鄭宇彤, Cai Pei Yun 蔡佩芸, Lin Jianhua 林建華

Suona (Chinese Oboe) 嗩吶:

Lin Ruibin 林瑞斌, Shi Ruihong 石瑞鴻

Yangqin (Chinese Dulcimer) 揚琴, Drum 鈸:

Li Shufen 李淑芬, Zheng Yafang 鄭雅方, Guo Zhenyu 郭珍妤

Ruan (Chinese Banjo) 阮, Cymbals 鈸:

Chen Chongqing 陳崇青, Yan Siyi 嚴思怡

Guzheng 古箏, Cymbals 鈸:

Lin Yixian 林易嫻, Lin Yaxiu 林雅琇

Erhu (Chinese Fiddle) 二胡, Cymbals 鈸:

Liu Zhiyuan 劉致遠, Chen Yuxuan 陳玉軒, Huang Ruifen 黃瑞芬, Ye Weiren 葉維仁

Big Drum 太鼓:

Liao Bosheng 廖柏昇, Xu Haoxiang 徐灝翔

Drum鼓: Zhuang Jiaqi 莊佳綺



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Basic Requirements for staging Ambush!

Cargo > Big Instruments (drums) and stage decoration will be shipped in a container approximately 2 months before the show. Smaller instruments are carried as cabin luggage by the musicians themselves.

Touring Staff > Flight tickets and hotel accommodations (close to the performance venue) for 35 persons starting from about 5 days before the shows: 27 musicians, 1 art director, 1 sound engineer, 1 stage director, 1 microphone engineer, 2 make-up artists, 2 administrators

Venue > should be a large-scale theater, a dance theater, or a festival venue (equipped with sufficient sound and lighting equipment, plus technical staff). Audience capacity should be 1000 seats up. No concert halls.

Time needed in Theater > Rehearsals (about 8 hours a day) starting approximately 5 days before the show.

Stage > Dimensions at least 12 m x 12 m. Floor: black linoleum or Marley-type vinyl floor + sub floor (as required by most dance companies).

Backstage > Dressing rooms with mirrors, lights, and tables for 27 performers. Toilets and showers with clean towels. Lockers, if available.

Catering > Snacks and beverages for 35 persons on days of shows and rehearsals.

Lighting and Sound Equipment > must be provided by venue and handled by the in-house technical staff who will be guided by our technical staff.

Translations > All promotion materials and technical information can be provided in English. For setting up the production and communicating with local staff and local media though, we need 1 or 2 translators from Chinese into the language of the country of performance.

>>> **Technical riders on sound, lighting, and stage on request.**

Workshops > We will be glad to hold workshops on Chinese Music and Chinese instruments before or after the shows.

>>> **See sheet "Workshops" for more details.**

