

November 8, 2018 at 7:30pm | **Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall**

First concert in the  
**CROSSROADS SERIES**  
a new series that draws musicians  
and music from around the globe to  
tell stories and spark conversation

## **WU FEI**

Guzheng

## **ABIGAIL WASHBURN**

Banjo

Tonight's program will be announced  
from the stage by the artists.

The concert will last approximately ninety minutes  
and will have no intermission.

# About the Program

Wu Fei's and Abigail Washburn's duo project is as unlikely, perhaps, as it was inevitable—a manifest sonic consequence of politics and vibrations commingling across continents. There is a directness in the musical duo format that makes it such a good vehicle for melodic conversations between close friends who obviously listen to each other with an athletic respect matched by their respective virtuosity.

Abigail Washburn, daughter of idealistic, hardworking Midwestern parents from Evanston, IL wasn't particularly musical as a child—that would come later. As a young girl in Beijing, Wu Fei was a musical prodigy, fast-tracked to be one of the very best musicians in a country of over a billion people. Abigail expected to become a lawyer with the goal of bettering U.S.-China relations. Fei was to become a professional musician performing state-sanctioned works in austere settings. But both women chose a fork in the road. Abigail has improved U.S.-China relations with a banjo not with a briefcase, touring the world and releasing a number of records that mingle Appalachian and Chinese

folk music. Wu Fei became a guzheng master and multilingual composer of her own works, assimilating avant-garde classical and folk music from around the world while retaining her own voice. Her time in the United States studying free improvisation led her to Boulder, CO where she would discover bluegrass music and meet Abigail.

Their duo is a musical resolution to their specific and differing issues about home. For Fei, it means an opportunity to assimilate elements of her musical argot—Chinese classical, folk, and opera—into song forms, while leaving room for the free associative tendencies she developed in the practice of free improvisation. In short, it marks a return to a thrown-out rule book with a changed perspective. For Abigail, it means musical collaboration with a “sister from another mister” who speaks all the same languages—someone with whom she can create brave, intimate music.

For the listener, it means a gift of unhurried music drawn freely from streams of raised consciousness, waves which met from halfway across the world to find they shared the same shake.

## COME BACK FOR MORE CROSSROADS SERIES CONCERTS...

14 Feb,  
2019 7:30pm

“8980: BOOK OF TRAVELERS”  
Gabriel Kahane, Singer-Songwriter

16 Apr,  
2019 7:30pm

“AVITAL MEETS AVITAL”  
Avi Avital, Mandolin | Omer Avital, Bass  
Yonathan Avishai, Piano | Itamar Doari, Percussion

---

For tickets and more information visit [princetonuniversityconcerts.org](http://princetonuniversityconcerts.org)

## About the Artists



Wu Fei Guzheng  
Abigail Washburn Banjo

### WU FEI, Guzheng

**This concert marks Wu Fei's Princeton University Concerts debut.**

Wu Fei is a native of Beijing and a current Nashville resident. She is a classically trained composer, master of the guzheng—the 21-string Chinese zither—and a vocalist. She plays in the guzheng's vernacular—a musical language which is at least 2,000 years old—and mixes Western classical and Chinese traditions with a contemporary, idiosyncratic sound. Her early music education was at the China Conservatory of Music, but she did her Master's at Mills College and later immersed herself in the New York City downtown improvisation scene at venues like The Stone, where Fei has frequently performed and curated.

Wu Fei composes for choir, string quartet, chamber ensemble, Balinese gamelan, and orchestra; her commissions range from

a composition for Percussions Claviers de Lyon that premiered in the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing to live performances in Paris and Tokyo for luxury brand Hermès. Currently, Wu Fei is the composer-in-residence for Chatterbird Ensemble. She has also been commissioned by Intersection Ensemble and individual soloists globally.

In addition to her own original compositions, Fei has collaborated with many artists of different disciplines and genres, ranging from Béla Fleck, Abigail Washburn, drummer Billy Martin (Medeski-Martin-Wood) to avant-garde composers John Zorn and Fred Frith. She has taken her guzheng and music around the world, and touring highlights include composition premieres at the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, the MoMA in New York City, North Sea Jazz Festival in The Netherlands, Vossa Jazz in Norway, Europalia Festival in Belgium, and the Big Ears Festival in Tennessee.

Wu Fei has released two solo records and one duo record with classical guitarist Gyan Riley. Each record exhibits both her unique solo improvisational vocabulary and her craft of composing for chamber orchestras. “Wu’s work evinces respect for tradition, an interest in what instruments can do, a strong sense of architecture, and good old-fashioned showmanship.” More information about Wu Fei can be found at [www.wufeimusic.com](http://www.wufeimusic.com).

---

More than  
2,000 years old,  
the 21-string  
guzheng became  
prominent during  
the Qin Dynasty  
(221 to 206 BCE),  
and by the Tang  
Dynasty (618 CE  
to 907 CE) it was  
arguably the most  
commonly played  
instrument in  
China.

## ABIGAIL WASHBURN, Banjo

**Abigail Washburn first appeared on our series with Béla Fleck in the 2016–2017 season. This is her second appearance at Princeton University Concerts.**

If American old-time music is about taking earlier, simpler ways of life and music-making as one's model, Abigail Washburn has proven herself to be a bracing revelation to that tradition. She—a singing, songwriting, Illinois-born, Nashville-based clawhammer banjo player—is every bit as interested in the present and the future as she is in the past and every bit as attuned to the global as she is to the local. Abigail pairs venerable folk elements with far-flung sounds, and the results feel both strangely familiar and unlike anything anybody's ever heard before.

One fateful day more than a decade ago, Washburn was miraculously offered a record deal in the halls of a bluegrass convention in Kentucky which changed her trajectory from becoming a lawyer in China to a traveling folk musician. Since then, Abigail has been recording and touring a continuous stream of music. Her music ranges from the “all-g’earl” string band sound of Uncle Earl to her bilingual solo release *Song of the Traveling Daughter* (2005), to the mind-bending “chamber roots” sound of the Sparrow Quartet, to the rhythms, sounds and stories of *Afterquake*, her fundraiser CD for the Sichuan earthquake victims. *The New York Times* praised her 2011 release, *City of Refuge*, written with collaborator, composer Kai Welch, saying the songs “mingle Appalachia and folk-pop, with

tinges of Asia and Bruce Springsteen.” Her most recent release, *Echo in the Valley* (2017), was recorded with her husband, 15-time Grammy award winning banjo virtuoso, Béla Fleck. *Echo in the Valley* is the follow up to Béla and Abigail's acclaimed, self-titled debut that earned the 2016 Grammy for Best Folk Album.

Having toured the world, Washburn is also armed with Chinese language ability and profound connections to culture and people on the other side of the Pacific. Washburn is one of the few foreign artists currently touring China independently and regularly. She completed a tour in 2011 of China's Silk Road supported by grants from the U.S. Embassy, Beijing. Abigail, along with 24 other innovative and creative thinkers worldwide, was named a TED fellow and gave a talk at the 2012 TED Convention in Long Beach, CA about building U.S.-China relations through music. In March of 2013, she was commissioned by New York Voices and The Public Theater to write and debut a theatrical work titled, *Post-American Girl*, which draws from her 17-year relationship with China and addresses themes of expanding identity, cultural relativism, pilgrimage, the universal appeal of music and opening the heart big enough to fold it all in. Abigail was recently named the first U.S.-China Fellow at Vanderbilt University. Her efforts to share U.S. music in China and Chinese music in the U.S. exist within a hope that cultural understanding and the communal experience of beauty and sound rooted in tradition will lead the way to a richer existence. More information about Abigail Washburn can be found at [www.abigailwashburn.com](http://www.abigailwashburn.com).

# Celebrating



**YEARS  
OF MUSIC  
MAKING**  
2018-2019 SEASON

Anniversaries are often a time for looking back on all that has come before. And with 125 years of presenting the world's greatest musicians—from cellist Yo-Yo Ma to violinist Isaac Stern, the Budapest String Quartet to contralto Marian Anderson, pianist Vladimir Horowitz to pianist Dame Myra Hess—there can be no doubt that Princeton University Concerts has made an immeasurable impact on the history of classical music.

But as we celebrate our 125th season, we choose to look toward the future.

Toward musical luminaries who transcend genre, bringing us to the very heart of music.

Toward an ever-evolving concert experience—from the focused intensity of Performances Up Close, to the transformative connectedness of Live Music Meditations—within the incredible intimacy of Richardson Auditorium and beyond.

Toward reshaping our musical canon through commissions, interdisciplinary initiatives, and reveling in the unexpected.

It will be a year-long celebration of our commitment to redefining how classical music is presented and experienced and striving to introduce ever broader audiences to the most gloriously life-affirming music that the world has to offer.

**This is just the beginning...**

# SUPPORT US

Supporting Princeton University Concerts is critical to our future. Ticket sales cover less than half of the cost of presenting the very best in world-class music. Remaining funds come, in part, from our generous endowment, left to PUC by the Ladies' Musical Committee in 1929. We remain eternally grateful for the support of the Philena Fobes Fine Memorial Fund and the Jesse Peabody Frothingham Fund.

Other support comes from donors like you. We are grateful to the individuals whose support at all levels ensures that the musical performance remains a vital part of Princeton, the community, and the region.

**If you wish to make a donation to Princeton University Concerts**, please call us at 609-258-2800, visit [princetonuniversityconcerts.org](http://princetonuniversityconcerts.org), or send a check payable to Princeton University Concerts to: Princeton University Concerts, Woolworth Center, Princeton, NJ 08544.

---

## THANK YOU!

We are deeply grateful for all of the support we have received and thank all of our donors and volunteers.

The list below acknowledges gifts of \$100 or more, received between April 1, 2018 and October 1, 2018. If you see an error, or would like to make a change in your listing, please contact the Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

### Brahms (\$500+)

John & Leigh Constable Bartlett  
Anne & Klaus Florey  
Lor & Michael Gehret  
Hinda Greenberg  
Stan & Adria Katz  
Norman & Nancy Klath  
Gail E. Kohn  
Andrew Moravcsik & Anne-Marie Slaughter  
Don Michael Randel  
Ralph & Joan Widner

### Mendelssohn (\$250-499)

Melanie & John Clarke  
Chris Coucill & Liz Fillo  
Ellis & Phyllis Finger  
Brandon C. Gaines  
Russell & Helen Kulsrud  
Melissa Lane & Andrew Lovett  
Anya & Andrew Littauer  
Donald Mills  
Jacqueline Mistow  
Ellen Morehouse  
Lucy Anne S. Newman  
Marcia Snowden

Kurt & Judit Stenn  
William Stowe & Karin Trainer  
Alec Tsuo  
Helmut & Caroline Weymar  
Susan Wilson

### Beethoven (\$100-249)

Sigmund Amster  
Rita Z. Asch  
Karen I. Blu  
Theodore Chase, Jr.  
Radu Constantinescu  
John Madison Cooper  
Joanne Elliott  
Arthur C. Eschenlauer  
Roe Goodman  
Lilian Grosz  
Pei Ying Hsiang  
Janet Joshua  
Judith Klotz  
Richard Kraeuter  
Maurice D. Lee, Jr.  
Marsha Levin-Rojer  
Celia Lidz  
Daniel Lister  
Edward Martinsen  
Elizabeth Morgan & Steven Lestition  
Armando Orozco  
Elaine Pasco  
Suzanne & Charles Rebick  
Inez & Richard Scribner  
Laura Sinderbrand  
Alice Small  
Claire H. Thomas  
Andros Thomson  
Jeanette Tregoe  
Anne M. Van Lent

**We are deeply grateful for all of the support we receive  
from our staff and volunteers.**

Princeton University Concerts

**Marna Seltzer**

Director

**John Burkhalter**

Subscription Manager

**Kerry Heimann**

Operations & Patron Services Manager

**Olga Kalantarov-Hautin**

Graphic Designer

**Dasha Koltunyyk**

Marketing & Outreach Manager

**Deborah Rhoades**

Accounts Manager

**Henry Valoris**

Production Manager

2018–2019 Princeton University  
Concerts Committee

**Michael Gehret** Chair

**Scott Burnham**

**Christine Gage**

**Gabriel Crouch**

**Ellis Finger**

**Brandon Gaines**

**John Hoffmeyer '19**

**Wendy Heller**

**Gail E. Kohn**

**Dorothea von Moltke**

**Don Michael Randel**

**Marcia Snowden**

**William Stowe**

**Marue Walizer**

2018–2019 Student Ambassadors of  
Princeton University Concerts

**Sérgio Martins De Iudicibus '20**

Co-Chair

**Tim Ruzsala '20**

Co-Chair

Campus Venue Services

**Nick Robinson**

Director

**Kathleen Coughlin**

Assistant Director,  
Performing Arts Services

**James Allington**

Audio Engineer

**Anne Cutrona**

Theater Operations Technician

**Matthew Halbert**

Theater Operations Technician

**Lindsay Hanson**

Artist Services Manager

**Mary Kemler**

Assistant Director, Client Resources

**Bryan Logan**

Production Manager,  
Performing Arts Services

**Sharon Maselli**

Audience Services Manager

**Bill Pierce**

Theater Operations Technician

**James Taylor**

Systems and Support Manager

---

Presenting the world's leading classical musicians at Princeton University since 1894, Princeton University Concerts aims to enrich the lives of the widest possible audience. We are grateful to **Wendy Heller**, Chair and Scheide Professor of Music History, and the **Department of Music** for its partnership in and support of this vision. For more information about the Department and its vibrant student and faculty led programming, please visit [music.princeton.edu](https://music.princeton.edu).