

European Chinese Ensemble

A concert in Fribourg

On the 29th of September 2017, the European Chinese Ensemble, founded, inspired and led by the internationally well-known pipa player Yang Jing, had the first concert of their new program in

Fribourg. With the support of the Groupe de Fribourg of the Swiss-Chinese Society (section romande), the concert attracted an interested and mixed audience where one would



find Chinese students and researchers at the University of Fribourg as well as people young and old from Fribourg and Lausanne.

The main theme of the repertoire was “moonlight”, which inspired poets as much in China and in Europe, but which reminded us as well that the Mid-Autumn Festival is a major event in Chinese culture. What enhanced further the interest of this concert was the creation of a work composed specially for this Ensemble by the well-known Fribourg composer Laurent Mettraux. So, not only did we hear a Chinese composer (by which I mean Yang Jing, now a Swiss national but brought up in the Chinese musical tradition) bringing

China and the West together, but also a Swiss brought up in the western tradition finding inspiration in China's culture. Mettraux's musical language is thoroughly contemporary, but his inspiration comes from the lyrics of Chinese poems that are deeply embedded in Chinese culture and are common knowledge to most Chinese.

The instruments forming the Ensemble produce an interesting "sound". The marimba is unusual in such a set up, but it did balance the pipa, the cello, the flute and the soprano very well. The soprano did a very good performance, managing to sing the Chinese words of the lyrics very clearly and very expressively. Yang Jing is, as could be expected, the real backbone of the whole concert, playing with equal musicality three traditional Chinese instruments, and providing a solo of pipa that displayed with brio the dazzling possibilities of this instrument.

The variety of the program, the high quality of the music and of the performers as well as the creative inspiration of the works, all these concur to make of this concert not only an interesting experiment of "East meets the West" or "West meets the East", but a truly purely cultural and musical enjoyment. One can only hope that the European Chinese Ensemble will go on following this path in future tournées.

Dominique Dreyer, Fribourg, 9th of October, 2017