Press Release

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December 9, 2016

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
presents

A Lunar New Year Celebration
February 3–6, 2017

featuring
Beijing Symphony Orchestra led by Maestro Muhai Tang
Free Millennium Stage performances
Free Family Day with arts and crafts

(WASHINGTON)—From February 3–6, 2017, the Kennedy Center presents a wide-ranging series of performances in celebration of the Lunar New Year. This year’s events mark the continuation of the annual festival at the Center, which honors the traditional holiday as commemorated in countries and territories around the world that follow the Lunar calendar.

The highlight of the Lunar New Year festivities is a concert by the Beijing Symphony Orchestra conducted by the internationally renowned Maestro Muhai Tang on February 6. The program will include a special orchestration of Gustav Mahler’s Song of the Earth with traditional Chinese instruments, featuring tenor Kang Wang and mezzo-soprano Huiling Zhu, a new version of Huang Ruo’s Wind Blows..., for oboe and orchestra commissioned by the Kennedy Center with Liang Wang (principal oboe for the New York Philharmonic), and a performance of Imperial Concubine in Tang Dynasty: Ode to Pear Blossom, a Beijing opera excerpt featuring Xinyue Zhang, one of the art form’s most acclaimed performers.
The celebration also features several free performances on the Millennium Stage, including traditional music by members of the Beijing Chinese Orchestra and members of the Beijing Opera Art's College (February 3); an innovative routine from professional artistic troupe Beijing Acrobats, (February 4); and AnDa Union – a company that reflects and presents the multi-ethnic heritage of Mongolian music and culture, (February 6). The schedule also features the center’s second Lunar New Year Family Day (February 4), this year celebrating the Year of the Rooster. The event offers fun activities and learning opportunities for kids of all ages, such as calligraphy writing demonstrations, sugar painting and bottle painting demonstrations, performance demonstrations from the Beijing Acrobats, and lessons in Chinese paper cutting and red lantern making. Family Day activities are free and open to the public in the Kennedy Center Atrium.

“We are pleased to celebrate annually the Lunar New Year at the Kennedy Center,” says Alicia Adams, Vice President of International Programming. “This year we are presenting artists from Beijing, Shanghai, to Inner Mongolia. China has the longest continuous history in the world—5,000 years. And in our time, it has some of the greatest classical and contemporary artists who fill conservatories and stages all over the world. We are excited to present some of these extraordinary artists.”

In 2005, the Kennedy Center presented a month long Festival of China. The festival featured four weeks of unprecedented performances and exhibitions from 900 artists, including eight premieres and more than a dozen free events. The celebration included the dedication of the Center’s Chinese Lounge on the Eisenhower Theater box tier level, which is home to severable notable works that were installed and created in collaboration with the China Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 2011, the Center presented China: The Art of Nation, a month long celebration of Chinese art, featuring music, dance, performances for children, and visual art installations. In 2016, the Kennedy Center launched the inaugural Lunar New Year Celebration, which included a special concert by the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Muhai Tang.

A full schedule of events follows.

**Traditional Chinese Music & Peking Opera**
Friday, February 3, 6 p.m.
Millennium Stage–FREE
Formerly known as the Chinese Music Group of Beijing Dance, Drama and Opera Theater, the newly renamed Beijing Chinese Orchestra (BCO) has been active for nearly 30 years as one of the most important performing arts groups in Beijing. Known for inheriting and promoting traditional Chinese music, collaborating with international partners, and educating musicians and audiences, BCO is steadfast in its responsibility to create Chinese music with a unique Beijing style. The group is quickly becoming a new icon of Chinese culture. Peking opera is a stylized form of opera dating back to the late 18th century. In this type of opera, speech, singing, mime, and acrobatics are often performed to an instrumental accompaniment. This Peking opera performance will be performed by students from Beijing Opera Art’s College, and will feature a variety of classic selections for this performance, including “The Crossroads,” “Jade Bracelet,” and “Storming the Sea Palace.”

Lunar New Year Family Day
Saturday, February 4, 10:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Kennedy Center Atrium–FREE
A number of free activities celebrating the Year of the Rooster will be offered for children and families, with several traditional handicap demonstrations focused on calligraphy, Chinese make-up, sugar and bottle painting, and more. The Embassy of China is showcasing an exhibition of framed paper, and the Beijing Acrobats and Chinese musicians will stage performance demonstrations throughout the day.

Beijing Acrobats
Saturday, February 4, 6 p.m.
Millennium Stage–FREE
Founded in 1957 in the birthplace of acrobats, Tianqiao, Beijing, Beijing Acrobats is a professional acrobatic troupe of distinctive artistic styles and innovation. They have performed both domestically and internationally, and for years have collaborated with the world-renowned Canadian circus troupe, Cirque du Soleil. This performance consists of a variety of acts, including drum tap-dancing, roller skating, lion dance, ancient stunts, to rug-spinning, ventriloquism, contortion, and straw-hat throwing.

AnDa Union
Monday, February 6, 6 p.m.
Millennium Stage–FREE
AnDa Union, often referred to as “music gatherers,” are part of a musical movement that is finding inspiration in old and forgotten songs which have all but disappeared as a result of China's recent tumultuous past. Their work digs deep into Mongol traditions while simultaneously creating a new form of music. AnDa Union also combines the different styles of both Inner and Outer Mongolia, developing a rare innovation.

Lunar New Year at the Kennedy Center: Beijing Symphony Orchestra
Monday, February 6, 8 p.m.
Kennedy Center Concert Hall
Tickets $15–$39

Beijing Symphony Orchestra
Maestro Tan Lihua, artistic director
Maestro Muhai Tang, conductor

Program:
*Eloignement*
Chen Qigang, composer

*Wind Blows… (New Version for Oboe and Orchestra)* commissioned by the Kennedy Center
Huang Ruo, composer
Soloist: Liang Wang, principal oboe for the New York Philharmonic

*Imperial Concubine in Tang Dynasty: Ode to Pear Blossom*
Nailin Yang, composer
Xinyue Zhang, soloist

*Song of the Earth*
Gustav Mahler, composer
Kang Wang, tenor
Huiling Zhu, mezzo-soprano

**Beijing Symphony Orchestra** is one of China’s preeminent and internationally acclaimed orchestras. Beijing Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1977 by Maestros Li Delun and Huang Feili, two of China’s most celebrated conductors. In the early 1990s, music director and principal conductor Tan Lihua led the orchestra through significant restructuring, with the support of the Beijing municipality. This led to its transformation into an orchestra of international repute. The orchestra features some of China’s foremost musicians and is widely noted for its artistic excellence, an extensive repertoire and unique Chinese style, and has become one of the nation’s most popular orchestras.

**Maestro Muhai Tang** is the most important conductor in music history of China. His international career started when Herbert von Karajan invited him to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra during the 1983–1984 seasons with great success. This invitation was later renewed. Tang is the only Grammy Award®–winning Chinese conductor. He was the chief conductor of the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Finnish National Opera, Belgrade Philharmonic, and artistic director of the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, China National Orchestra. He is currently the Artistic Director of The Tianjin Grand Opera, the Shanghai Philharmonic; the Principal Guest Conductor of Hamburg Symphony orchestra and Prague Symphony Orchestra; and the conductor of the China National Symphony Orchestra and Queensland Symphony Orchestra.
Composer **Huang Ruo** has been lauded by *The New Yorker* as “one of the world’s leading young composers” and by *The New York Times* for having “a distinctive style.” His vibrant and inventive musical voice draws equal inspiration from Chinese ancient and folk music, Western avant-garde, experimental, noise, natural and processed sound, rock, and jazz to create a seamless, organic integration using a compositional technique he calls “Dimensionalism.” Ruo’s music has been premiered and performed by the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Houston Symphony, National Polish Radio Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Ensemble Modern, London Sinfonietta, Asko/Schoenberg Ensemble, and has been conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch, Marin Alsop, Michael Tilson Thomas, and James Conlon. Born in Hainan, China, Huang Ruo received his bachelor of music degree from the Oberlin College and his masters of music and Ph.D. degrees from The Juilliard School. Ruo now lives in New York City and his music is published by G. Ricordi. Ruo was awarded the prestigious Goddard Lieberson Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in May 2016. The Kennedy Center has commissioned a new version of *Wind Blows*... for oboe and orchestra to premiere with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra.

**Liang Wang** joined the New York Philharmonic in September 2006 as principal oboe. Previously he was principal oboe of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (2005–2006), Santa Fe Opera (2004–2005), and San Francisco Ballet Orchestra; associate principal oboe of the San Francisco Symphony; and guest principal oboe of the Chicago and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras. He has performed as a concert soloist with the New York Philharmonic 23 times, including his debut performing Richard Strauss’s Oboe Concerto, led by Xian Zhang in Hong Kong during the Orchestra’s 2008 tour of Asia. A recipient of the 2014 Beijing International Music Festival Artist of the Year award, Wang served as artist-in-residence of the Qing Dao Symphony Orchestra, his hometown orchestra, during the 2014–2015 season. Wang made his Carnegie Hall solo debut in April 2011 performing Chen Qiqang’s *Extase*. In December 2014, he performed Mozart’s Oboe Concerto with the New York String Orchestra, led by Jaimie Laredo at Carnegie Hall Stern Auditorium. He is currently on the faculties of the Manhattan School of Music and New York University, and is an honorary professor at Beijing’s Central Conservatory of Music and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

**Kang Wang** is an Australian-Chinese tenor and the son of two renowned opera singers originally from Harbin, China. Wang finished his master of music studies at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University in Australia under Mr. Joseph Ward OBE. Wang won the People’s Choice Award in the Dame Joan Sutherland National Vocal Award, and performed in the final concert of the Australian Singing Competition at the Sydney Opera House as one of the five finalists. Since 2010 he has appeared as a guest soloist in more than 20 concerts with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. In September 2011, Kang made his operatic debut as Rinuccio in Queensland Conservatorium’s production of *Gianni Schicchi*, and has performed the title role of Tom Rakewell in Queensland Conservatorium’s production of Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*. Wang
has been a member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program of The Metropolitan Opera since September 2015. In February 2016, he sang the role of Elvino in the Met-Juilliard production of La Sonnambula at The Juilliard School, and he recently made his debut at The Metropolitan Opera in the role of Narraboth in the Met’s production of Salome.

Huiling Zhu, a young Chinese mezzo-soprano, was born in Shanghai. After graduating from the middle school affiliated with Shanghai Conservatory of Music where she studied with Prof. Bian Jingzu, she started her vocal study in Europe. She studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg under Prof. Ingrid Kremling where she earned her bachelors and masters degree in Lieder-Oratorio and Opera with a first outstanding award. In 2011, she received her doctoral degree in opera performance and vocal and opera singing at the Hochschule für Musik Stuttgart, studying under Professor Dunja Vejzovic. She is a winner of the Elisa-Meyer Vocal Competition and Timmendorfer Strand Music Festival Singing Competition in Germany, and the Nagasaki Music Competition in Japan. Her opera repertoire includes Carmen (Carmen), Werther (Charlotte), Così fan tutte (Dorabella), Rigoletto (Maddalena), Rheingold (Rheintochter), and Wilderness (Jiao’s Mother), as well as some German and Austrian operettas. Besides opera, Zhu is also an outstanding concert singer, and has performed Lieder recitals in Germany, Japan, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Since 2008, Zhu has served as the artistic director of the charitable foundation Stiftung Chinesische Nachwuchskünstler e. V. Hamburg in Germany.

Xinyue Zhang is a well-known Beijing opera performer who has attained Class-A performer status in China. She is a recipient of the prestigious Plum Blossom prize, is a member of the Ministry of Culture youth committee and a representative of Fengtai District in Beijing for the People’s Congress. In 1996, she had the privilege of studying with Mei Baojiu, who is the son one of the most famous Beijing opera actors of all time, Mei Lanfang. Zhang is considered one of the finest representatives alive today of the “Mei Lanfang” school of Beijing opera. In 1998, she was admitted to the Academy of Chinese Traditional Opera where she graduated with honors. While there, she concentrated on mastering the Beijing opera role Qing Yi Hua Shan, which is a combination of Qing Yi (singing female role) and Hua Dan (acting female role). Since August 2003, she has been working as a leading actor for the Mei Lanfang opera troupe. In 2014, Zhang participated in a world tour to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mei Lanfang.

**TICKET INFORMATION**
Tickets to the Lunar New Year at the Kennedy Center concert featuring the Beijing Symphony Orchestra on Monday, February 6, 2016 at 8 p.m. in the Concert Hall start at $15 and are currently on sale. Tickets are available for purchase at the Kennedy Center Box Office, by calling InstantCharge at (202) 467-4600, or through the Kennedy Center website at www.kennedy-center.org. All Millennium Stage performances and Family Day activities are free and open to the public.
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Millennium Stage Performances & Family Day: Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture, Beijing Association for Cultural Exchanges, and Beijing Culture and Arts Fund.

Beijing Symphony Orchestra: US-China Cultural Institute, Cultural Associate of the Committee of 100 Shirley Young, Chair

For more information, please visit the Kennedy Center website.

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