

Listening Guide

Sheng: *China Dreams: Prelude*

DATE OF WORK: 1995

MEDIUM: Orchestra, with diverse percussion instruments

MOVEMENTS: *Prelude*
Fanfare
The Stream Flows
The Three Gorges of the Long River

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Asian musical lines and textures evoked.
Lyrical pentatonic melodies in woodwinds and strings; transformed throughout.
Melodies subtly syncopated over barlines.
Brilliant orchestration; instrument families juxtaposed.
Brass and harp used percussively; dissonant punctuations.
Sliding (glissando) effects in low brass, timpani, strings.

Oboe and English horn, with haunting pentatonic melody with grace notes, accompanied by viola line and plucked low strings:



Melody taken over by clarinets, interrupted by quick flourishes in double reeds and trumpets; punctuated by harp and percussion; very Asian sound:

Tpt. in C

con sord.

legato

f *p*

Harp

ff

Melody passed to bass clarinet, closes on held note (fermata).

Pace slackens (*meno mosso*); new version of melody in violas:

ppp

Sharp, percussive notes plucked in violins and harp; crescendos to fortissimo.

Loud motive in French horns interrupts piccolo melody; more animated, then decrescendo:

Piccolo

ff *p*

Horns open

ff *p*

Quieter section; flute with melody, accompanied by active harp line and trombone playing glissandos:

f *p*

gliss.

Violins have melody; lyrical.

Flute melody accompanied by repeated notes in flute/piccolo.

Rich string section takes over; brass interjection.

Texture becomes more polyphonic; builds to climax.

Loud timpani and low brass intrude on melody, *fortissimo*; timpani and trombones with glissandos.

Brass dominate with quick inverted dotted idea; rising then falling; very loud climax; trombones and timpani sliding in intervals.

Decrescendo to *ppp*.

Return to English horn melody, accompanied by high piccolo and pizzicato strings; soft dissonance fades out.