



Vivian Fung  
**STRING QUARTET NO. 2**

**Canadian Premiere Performance**  
**PROGRAMME NOTES**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Of the Wind**
- III. Of Birds and Insects**
- IV. Interlude – With Calmness: “Klangfarbenmelodie”**
- V. Of Tribes and Villages**
- VI. Postlude: Of Ghosts and Memories**

(There will be no pauses between the first and second, second and third, and fifth and sixth movements)

As a composer, I try to best represent in musical terms my own individual voice in each work that I write. Even though each composition addresses different artistic challenges, issues of my Asian identity underscore much of my work. Oftentimes, the source of inspiration for a work lies in Asian folk materials, as is the case in this String Quartet No. 2, which uses a Chinese folksong as the basis of the introduction, interlude, and postlude.

Having heard the Shanghai Quartet in performance and on recordings many times, I realized that the group has not only the technical and musical artistry to rival any of the top string quartets in the world, but also a special lyricism and sensitivity that sets it apart.

I wanted to write music that could highlight all the above qualities for the group, and chose a format of six shorter movements, with each movement being a study in a certain mood or effect, represented in the subtitles of the movements. These descriptions are not to be taken literally, but are more evocative in flavor.

The first movement, *Introduction*, introduces the folk song as a chorale with the instruction “to be played like a consort of viols.” In other words, I wanted an ancient sound quality to this introduction, as though the movement was written many moons ago.

The second movement, subtitled *Of the Wind*, evokes ferocity and aggression, and the challenge comes with the different bow strokes involved and the virtuosic scalar passages featured.

The third movement, *Of Birds and Insects*, is meant to be playful and humorous, using many off-the-bow strokes, natural harmonics, and ornamentation, including glissandi and trills, to depict the sounds of nature.

The fourth movement, *Interlude*, restates the folksong of the first movement, but in a disguised form in which each note of the melody is played by a different member of the quartet—hence the term *klangfarbenmelodie*, German for “tone-color-melody.”

The fifth movement, *Of Tribes and Villages*, features a distinct rhythmic drive as well as a songful melody in the middle section.

The last movement, *Of Ghosts and Memories*, restates the folk song as a slow chorale and is constantly interjected with quotations, or “memories,” of the previous movements.