



East and West in one pianist

By Tom Carr

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TRAVERSE CITY -- Pianist Xiayin Wang honed her technical music skills at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, which she entered at age 9.

She soaked the music into her soul when she later moved to New York in 1997 and studied at the Manhattan School of Music.

"I always had my goal to have my Western music education from where it was born," said Wang, who will perform at City Opera House on Friday, Nov. 21.

Not that she plays all American music, though she does plan to play selections from Brooklyn's own George Gershwin.

She also plans to play pieces by Mozart, Ravel, Prokofiev and the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin.

"I will play a variety of styles, from classical to romantic to American to impressionism, to 20th century," said Wang, who won't give her age beyond saying she is an adult.

Her selection "has a lot of different colors and different ideas," she said.

"The Ravel piece is a grand waltz. It just has so many harmonic colors that Ravel wrote into this piece."

"I love music with a lot of emotion and sentimentality in a different way and I love to play romantic music," she said, adding that "romance is just pouring out of the (Scriabin) piece."

Often when she plays an encore, she chooses a Chinese piece.

Her father, Zhongyu Wang, is a famous musician on her home continent. He plays Eastern music on the erhu, which is also called the two-stringed fiddle.

Wang still draws on some of her ethnic roots in her playing, even though she focuses primarily on European and American music.

"Asian music is very lyrical and more delicate than the Western style," she said. "Music is related. But if you really want to point out the Eastern and the Western, if you're talking about the way I feel, it's very different. When I play, the structure is different. The picture you're playing is different."

There were also major differences in musical education between the two societies.

"Here, you're expected to use more of your own ideas and your own opinions are more crucial than what the teacher tells you," she said. "Here, I had more freedom to do what I want to do. In China, I received a very good technical foundation. It's very strict. Teachers watch you practice."

"I don't dislike China, but I'm just telling you the difference," she said.

Wang will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21, at the City Opera House. Tickets are \$29 for adults and \$15 for students and are available through www.cityoperahouse.org.

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Photos



Wang