

**ABIGAIL WASHBURN**, banjo (USA)

and

**WU FEI**, guzheng (China)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019 • 8PM

MILKBOY ARTHOUSE

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Bonded by their bi-cultural sisterhood, **Abigail Washburn and Wu Fei** sing and perform original compositions inspired by weaving together Appalachian and Chinese folk songs. Washburn and Fei released their first duo record, produced by Béla Fleck, in Fall 2018. To support the mission behind their music, Washburn and Fei created an educational initiative called The Ripple Effect, which aims to bridge hearts and minds through cross-cultural collaboration, starting with the U.S. and China, and the universal language of music.

**Abigail Washburn** is a Grammy Award winning vocalist, songwriter and clawhammer banjo player based in Nashville, TN. A Mandarin Chinese speaker, she regularly toured China for 20 years, including a month-long tour of China's Silk Road supported by grants from the US Embassy in Beijing. Washburn's musical projects range from her string band, Uncle Earl, to her bilingual releases *Song of the Traveling Daughter* (2005) and *City of Refuge* (2011), to the mind-bending "chamber roots" sound of the Sparrow Quartet (featuring Béla Fleck, Casey Driessen and Ben Sollee), to *Afterquake*, her fundraiser CD for Sichuan earthquake victims. Washburn's most recent record with her husband, Béla Fleck, won a 2016 Grammy for Best Folk Album. Washburn is a TED Fellow and gave a talk at the 2012 TED Convention titled Building U.S.-China Relations ... by Banjo, where she spoke about her true story of shifting from a future in law to a pursuit of musical bridging. *NPR* voted Washburn's 2012 commencement speech at her alma mater, Colorado College, as one of the best 300 in US history. In March 2013, New York Voices and the NY Public Theater commissioned Washburn to write and debut a theatrical work, *Post-American Girl*, which drew from her then 17-year relationship with China. The work addressed themes of expanding identity, cultural relativism, pilgrimage and the universal appeal of music. Washburn is the first US-China Fellow at Vanderbilt University.

Beijing-native **Wu Fei** is a master of the guzheng, the ancient 21-string Chinese zither. She has been trained as a Western classical composer, vocalist and plays beautifully in the guzheng's vernacular – a musical language that is at least 2,000 years old. Fei mixes her Western and Chinese traditional sensibilities with a contemporary idiosyncratic, experimental dialect nurtured by years spent at Mills College and immersed in New York City's improvisation scene. Fei's commissions range from a composition for Percussions Claviers de Lyon that premiered in the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing to live performances in Paris and Tokyo for luxury brand Hermès. In addition to her own original compositions, Fei has collaborated with many artists of different disciplines and genres ranging from Béla Fleck to avant garde composer John Zorn. Fei has taken her guzheng and her compositions around the world. Touring highlights include composition premiere at the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, the MoMA in New York City, North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, Vossa Jazz Festival in Norway, Europalia in Belgium and Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, TN. Fei was recently commissioned by Intersection Ensemble in Nashville, TN to create a new work for guzheng, voice and western chamber ensemble which she titled *If I Was A Batman Queen*.