



# THE POWER OF MUSIC AROUND THE WORLD

- ❖ Wu Fei and Abigail Washburn have brought two different parts of the world together from the folk music traditions of China and the United States together in their music
- ❖ **Wu Fei** is from Beijing China and was born on May 12, 1977
- ❖ Currently living in Nashville, she plays the Guzheng a 21 stringed zither instrument which goes back at least 2,000 years old
- ❖ Western classical and Chinese traditions with a contemporary idiosyncratic sound
- ❖ She has collaborated with many different American disciplines and genres such as Bela Flek, Abigail Washburn(Bluegrass/American) and Billy Martin(Jazz-funk)
- ❖ She has performed concerts and workshops around the world in places including Princeton University, UNC-Chapel Hill, UC Irving, Vanderbilt University, Norwegian Music Academy and China Conservatory of Music
- ❖ <http://www.wufeimusic.com/bio>



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- ❖ **Abigail Washburn** – Born November 10, 1977 in Evanston, Illinois and spent much of elementary and junior high years in suburban D.C.
- ❖ High school in Minnesota then studied at Colorado College – 1<sup>st</sup> East Asia studies student
- ❖ Learned Mandarin during the summers with intensive study at Middlebury College in Vt.
- ❖ Spent time after that in China and decided to become a lawyer to become a top-down policy changes to help improve U.S. China relations
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDly58g9n2k>
- ❖ Later decided to pursue a musical career in Nashville where she met K.C groves and joined her band ***Uncle Earl***, an all female band playing bluegrass/Americana
- ❖ Song-writing contest at MerleFest and won 2<sup>nd</sup> place for her song ***“Rockabye Dixie”***
- ❖ ***Sparrow Quartet*** – traveled China and toured Tibet in 2006 (1<sup>st</sup> American band to do so)
- ❖ 2008 at the Beijing Olympics and taught American Folk Music at Sichuan University
- ❖ <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/abigail-washburn-mn0000776618/biography>
- ❖ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abigail\\_Washburn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abigail_Washburn)



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- ❖ Wu and Abigail became friends over a decade ago and after performing together for years decided to record an album together
- ❖ They sat down with friends discussing about their paths to becoming musicians and how their new work is melding Chinese and American folk music
- ❖ They have traveled together, have children of similar age and their friendship brought out this desire to perform their different musical traditions together with their performances and now with the new album that should be out this April
- ❖ <https://supchina.com/podcast/beijing-banjo-wu-fei-and-abigail-washburn/>
- ❖ They have worked together on this new album which has 10 songs that combines traditional American and Chinese Folk songs
- ❖ The album is to be incorporated into curriculums for elementary, middle school, high school and community college classes across North Carolina
- ❖ Three instructors at each level is developing curriculum for their different disciplines



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- ❖ ***The Water is Wide/Wusuli Boat Song*** – This is a compilation of two songs combined with ***The Water is Wide*** an American song that has a long history going back to Ireland and Scotland in the 1600's that came with immigrants to America and ***Wusuli Boat Song*** that comes from China – they turn the two songs into one combined
- ❖ ***Wusuli Boat Song*** – this song comes from an ethnic minority the Hezhe people who live near the Wusuli River on the border of Northern China and Russia
- ❖ There are less than 5,000 Hezhe people in China today – one of the smallest ethnicities yet the Wusuli Boat song is one of the most popular folk songs in China
- ❖ Wusuli means river in Manchu – Hezhe one of the most endangered lyrics of the Tungusic language groups and does not have a written form
- ❖ <https://www.chinatravel.com/facts/hezhe-ethnic-minority.htm>
- ❖ Ancestry goes back to the Xihens (Suzhans or Jizhens) a race of the nomadic Tartar people in northern China in going back to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE)
- ❖ Wusuli River they live off of the fishing, making clothing out of fish skin or animal skin
- ❖ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxEa\\_mDXusk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxEa_mDXusk)



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## ❖ *Wusuli Boat Song* – English and Chinese Lyrics

《乌苏里船歌》

乌苏里乌拉

纳尼哟纳贝

绵绵的青山，蓝蓝的水  
鱼儿那个窜呐，浪儿那个飞  
额涅在船头她摇着宝贝

(English Translation)

Wusuli wula\*

Flowing on my land\*

Vast mountains, blue water

Fish jump, waves lapping,

Mama cradles baby on the bow of the boat, rocking, rocking.



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- ❖ ***The Water is Wide*** – Cherished hymn going back to Ireland/Scotland in the 1600's CE
- ❖ Early versions focused on love between two lovers, later became a hymn about the love one has for Jesus
- ❖ An early version was titled "***Oh Waly, Waly, Gin Love Be Bonny***"
- ❖ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opfEk\\_Yoksk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opfEk_Yoksk)
- ❖ Folk singers such as Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan – 1940-70's

***The water is wide, I can't cross o'er  
and neither have I wings to fly  
give me a boat that can carry two  
and we shall row my child and I***

- ❖ As Abigail and Wu began working on the album they were discussing what lullaby songs that each sang to their children – decided to combine these two songs
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5Di8NQGkml>



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- ❖ **Banjo Guzheng Picking Girl** – this song is an American bluegrass song from the 1930's
- ❖ **Banjo Picking Girl** was originally written and performed by Lily Mae Ledford (1917-1985)
- ❖ Powell County, Kentucky - performed with an all girl band **Coon Creek Band** 1930's
- ❖ Performed all over America and once played for President Franklin D. Roosevelt along with King George VI and Queen Elizabeth
- ❖ <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/lily-may-ledford>
- ❖ Coon Creek Band recording of the song
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7NXpjK3t5I>
- ❖ The song speaks of going to China – Abigail and Wu have performed it in China
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5GyM3rI3VA>



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- ❖ Abigail and Wu have performed in China and America using their music to reach out to both cultures with the shared experience of music
- ❖ Each performer has a love of music, a love of the other's culture and a deep friendship with each other. Together they are working to help each others culture see how we are all people with the same goals, desires and dreams.
- ❖ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PULp6jWJNk>
- ❖ They are trying to reach out to their world's in America/China and elsewhere to be an influence of positive change
- ❖ Throughout the history of the world music has often been a way to bridge different groups and cultures together for a better understanding