



Liu Sola

Biography by Craig Harris

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The musical traditions of China have been blended with jazz, blues, and improvisation by composer, author, and vocalist Liu Sola. Her recordings have spanned from multicultural treatments of the blues...

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The musical traditions of China have been blended with jazz, blues, and improvisation by composer, author, and vocalist [Liu Sola](#). Her recordings have spanned from multicultural treatments of the blues -- [Blues in the East](#), recorded with guitarist [James Blood Ulmer](#), [Parliament-Funkadelic](#) drummer Jerome Bailey, Chinese pipa player [Wu Man](#), avant-garde saxophonist [Henry Threadgill](#), and vocalist [Umar Bin Hassan](#) of [the Last Poets](#), and produced by [Bill Laswell](#), to psychedelic Chinese rock, [China Collage](#). While [www.chinasprout](#) claimed that "this is not your standard Chinese music -- it is extremely contemporary with a strong multicultural influence," the [New York Press](#) referred to [Sola](#) as "the only Chinese artist who would qualify to play the New Orleans Jazz Festival." The [New York Times](#) cited her ability to "wander from echoes of Chinese opera to simple folk-like melodies."

The daughter of prominent figures in China's Communist Party, [Liu](#) spent her early life in luxury. An uncle, Liu Zhidan, was a high-ranking general in the Red Army until his death and martyrdom in 1936. Her family's fortunes changed dramatically when her father's comrade-in-arms, Gao Gang, was accused of treason by Mao Tse-Tung and sentenced to death in 1955. As the result of a scorching account of the situation written by her mother, both of her parents were exiled to a rural pig farm, where they remained for two decades. Together with her older brother and sister, [Liu](#) was raised by a family in

the capital city. Music played an essential role throughout Liu's life. She began studying classical piano at the age of five. Although she also studied Peking Opera, she was drawn more to Chinese folk music. Entering the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, in 1977, she studied composition. A symphony memorializing her uncle, composed for her thesis, was performed by the Chinese Opera House Orchestra.

Graduating in 1981, Liu began writing short stories and novels. Her first novella, Ni Bie Wu Xuanze (You Have No Choice), was hailed by China's disenfranchised urban youth and won a prestigious Chinese National Novella award. Liu's first full-length novel, Chaos and All, written while she was briefly residing in London and published in 1989, was followed by Da Ji Jia De Xiao Gu Shi in January 2000. Her novella, Blue Sky Green Sea, was translated into English and performed as a rock opera in 1998 with the Chinese Central Symphony Orchestra and a rock band.



Liu has continued to explore a diverse range of music. She formed an all-female Pink Floyd-influenced rock band in the mid-'80s. She recorded a rock opera version of Blue Sky Green Sea in 1988 with the Chinese Central Symphony Orchestra, and a Hong Kong-based rock band. Moving to London later the same year, she formed a reggae band with British, Japanese, and Chinese musicians. Inspired by the music of Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin, who she first heard while visiting the United States in 1987, Liu returned to the U.S., two years later to spend time in the Mississippi Delta, meeting and playing with scores of blues musicians.

She made her permanent home in the United States after being accepted into the University of Iowa's International Writing Program in 1992. Liu continued to be active as a musician and composer. Her modern dance composition, "June Snow," was featured in Michael Apter's documentary video Moving the Mountains in 1999. The same year, the New Julliard Ensemble performed her piece "In Corporeal" at Lincoln Center. Returning to China for the first time in a decade, Sola performed in Beijing and Shanghai and recorded an album, *Sola & Friends in Beijing*.

Discography

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full

condensed

blue highlight denotes album pick

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Albums All

	Year	Album	Label	AllMusic Rating	User Ratings
	1994	Blues in the East 	Axiom Records / Axiom		 (1)
	2000	Haunts 	Orchard		 (0)
	2000	June Snow 	Also Productions / Orchard		 (0)
	2000	Sola and Friends	Orchard		 (0)
	2000	Point Zero	Orchard		 (0)
	2000	Point Zero: Practice Qi-Gong	Orchard		 (0)
	2000	Apparitions 	Orchard		 (0)
	2000	Spring Snowfall 	Orchard		 (0)

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Song Highlights

Title/Composer

Highlights

All Songs

[A Discourse on the Zither](#)

Liu Sola / Umar Bin Hassan

[Artemis, the Goddess of the Hunt](#) feat. Amina Claudine Myers

[Beyond the Great Wall](#)

[Boya's Adventures](#)

Liu Sola / Umar Bin Hassan

[Boya's Lament](#)

Liu Sola / Umar Bin Hassan

[Breaking the Zither](#)

Liu Sola / Umar Bin Hassan

[Death](#) feat. Wu Man / Sola & Wu-Man

Liu Sola / Speedealer

[Festivals](#) feat. Wu Man / Sola & Wu-Man

Liu Sola

[Fox Trot](#)

Liu Sola

Haunts

Liu Sola

Introduction

Life Journeys feat. Wu Man / Sola & Wu-Man

Liu Sola

Looking Back

Love feat. Wu Man / Sola & Wu-Man

Liu Sola

Maze feat. Mari Boine / Mari Boine & Sola

Traditional

Meeting With the Woodcutter Ziqi

Liu Sola / Umar Bin Hassan

Oh Mother

Point

Liu Sola

Soaring

Liu Sola

The Appointment With Ziqi

The Broken Zither

The Broken Zither (Introduction)

Liu Sola

The Goose

War feat. Wu Man / Sola & Wu-Man

Liu Sola

Zero

Liu Sola

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Credits

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Year ▾	Album	Artist	All Credits ▾
2011	A Bridge of Dreams	Ars Nova Copenhagen / Paul Hillier	Composer
2005	King Size Dub: Chapter 11		Composer
2005	Subharmonic in Dub	Bill Laswell	Composer
2000	Apparitions	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Executive Producer
2000	Haunts	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Arranger, Mixing, Liner Notes, Vocals, Piano, Executive Producer, Composer
2000	June Snow	Liu Sola	Primary Artist
2000	Point Zero	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Programming, Voices, Executive Producer, Composer

Credits

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2000	June Snow	Liu Sola	Primary Artist
2000	Point Zero	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Programming, Voices, Executive Producer, Composer

2000	Point Zero: Practice Qi-Gong	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Mixing, Programming, Executive Producer, Composer
2000	Sola and Friends	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Vocals, Composer
2000	Spring Snowfall	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Producer, Executive Producer
1999	Holding up Half the Sky: Voices of Asian Women		Performer, Composer, Primary Artist
1998	Hall of the Mysteries	Teiesterion	Vocals
1997	China Collage	Sola & Wu-Man	Arranger, Vocals, Voices, Performer, Composer, Primary Artist
1997	Holding Up Half the Sky: Voices of African Women		Performer, Composer, Primary Artist
1996	Alien Ambient Galaxy	Subharmonic	Construction, Composer
1996	Altered Beats: Assassin Knowledges of the Remanipulated		Composer, Featured Artist, Primary Artist
1996	Myth, Dreams of the World		Performer, Primary Artist

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1995	A Week or Two in the Real World		Arranger, Vocals, Performer, Primary Artist
1994	Blues in the East	Liu Sola	Primary Artist, Liner Notes, Vocals, Vocals (Background), Composer
1994	Light In Extension	Divination	Vocals, Sounds
1993	Ambient Dub, Vol. 1	Divination	Guest Artist, Vocals, Sounds, Composer
1993	Hallucination Engine	Material	Voices
1993	Trisan	Trisan	Vocals
1989	Vini Reilly	The Durutti Column	Vocals
1987	The Guitar and Other Machines	The Durutti Column	Vocals