

SHIH-HUI CHEN (b. 1962)

SILVERGRASS & OTHER ORCHESTRAL WORKS

1. *Fantasia on the Theme of Guanglingsan*  
*for Zheng and Chinese Orchestra* (2014) 11:31

廣陵散的迴響

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2. *A Plea to Lady Chang'e for Nanguan Pipa and Chamber Orchestra* (2014) 9:09

推枕著衣—南管新唱

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梅花操的迴響

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琵琶協奏曲

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*Silvergrass, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* (2016) 12:20

菅芒花大提琴協奏曲

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Wen-Sinn Yang, soloist; National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra; Yao-Yu Wu, conductor

TT:64:42

SHIH-HUI CHEN  
SILVERGRASS  
& OTHER ORCHESTRAL WORKS



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**I**ntercultural composition is no longer a novelty. It has become a familiar, even commonplace, phenomenon. With this recording, **Shih-Hui Chen** (b. 1962) breathes fresh air into this important genre. In more ways than one, her transcultural work has blurred the lines between individual cultures and represents our rich musical horizon today.

Chen excelled in the international modern-music scene well before she undertook intercultural projects. Her earlier work is characterized by intense modernist sonorities, polyphonic layers, yearning angular melodies, and firm control of orchestral timbre and structure. Arriving in the United States in 1982, she was soon hailed as an outstanding young composer of her generation. By the year 2000, when she joined the composition faculty of Rice University, she had been the recipient of two composition fellowships at the prestigious Tanglewood Music Festival, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Academy in Rome Prize, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her String Quartet No. 3 (1994), premiered by the Arditti Quartet at Tanglewood, was lauded by *The Boston Globe* as having "... a sureness of step and gentleness of spirit that are very winning." Her *Twice Removed* for clarinet (2002), performed at Lincoln Center, was praised by the *New York Times*' critic Allan Kozinn as "... ruminative and involving, drawing the listener in through a process of gradual thematic metamorphosis." The "gradual thematic metamorphosis" is indeed a modernist trait of her musical language. Chen's turn toward intercultural composition does not represent a break from this composition style. Rather, the texture, intensity, and sonic web of her recent work all bear traces of the earlier style, thus continuing to ensure a sophisticated sonic tapestry. It is the profound balance

between her earlier modernist sensibility, with its rigorous control of polyphonic layers and structural design on the one hand, and her search for the inner self with materials distinctly different from Western tradition, that marks her accomplishment as a 21st-century composer.

Chen spent much of her childhood with her grandmother, who owned a working-class hotel in a small town, Pa-Tu. The hotel lobby, where she spent long afternoons watching people and listening to Taiwanese opera, made a lasting impression. Such an upbringing fostered a closeness to Taiwan and filled her ears and eyes with down-to-earth musicmaking of the everyday, some of which she began exploring in *Fu II* (1999). In the five works collected here (ranging from 2002 to 2016), Chen broadens her reach into several branches of vernacular music—Nanguan music and Taiwanese opera—and the Chinese zither of traditional literati. Incorporating musical traditions from different sectors of society gives considerable vital force to her works.

Notwithstanding this commonality, these works differ in significant ways. Two use traditional Chinese instruments as soloists with a Western orchestra, one is written for both solo Chinese instrument and Chinese orchestra, and the two remaining works are scored for Western orchestra. Yet it is the source of inspiration that really sets them apart. The earliest work, *Concerto for Pipa and Chamber Orchestra* (2002), is abstract in conception, with prominent pipa gestures that infuse the composition with distinctive sonorities and melodic tropes. This is followed by three works, each of which uses a melodic source from traditional Chinese genres. *Fantasia on the Theme of Guanglingsan for Zheng and Chinese Orchestra* (2014) is based on a well-known masterwork, which is full of drama and contrast. It shares certain sonic similarities with the pipa concerto. As a pair they differ significantly from the

two following works, centered around Taiwanese Nanguan music. *Fantasia on the Theme of Plum Blossoms for String Orchestra* (2012) uses as its basis a famous tune from the Nanguan repertoire, while *A Plea to Lady Chang'e for Nanguan Pipa and Chamber Orchestra* (2013) is essentially a setting of a traditional Nanguan song in the modernist sonic fabric. Both were composed after Chen spent a year as a Fulbright fellow in Taiwan, fully immersed in the genre. Nanguan has deep roots in Taiwanese culture and society, with which Chen identifies in a profound way. Finally, *Silvergrass, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* (2016) represents a step further in that direction, not only tracing the sonic aspect of another indigenous music genre—Taiwanese opera—but also delving deeply into the words, sensibility, and poetic expression of one of the island's literary legends, author Huang Chunming, who is known for his plain, richly colloquial voice. The five works therefore present a subtle progression toward stronger utterance of the land that constitutes Chen's musical imagination.

*Concerto for Pipa* is a second collaboration with pipa player Wu Man, for whom she wrote *Fu I* and *Fu II* in 1999. The northern pipa used here is a four-stringed lute which has a pear-shaped wooden body with a varying number of frets, played vertically. Its characteristic sounds include sharp percussive fast strumming, five-fingered tremolos, rapid slides, and cascades of rolling notes. Chen fully explores the extremes of the pipa's expressivity, from the bright and harsh sounds of a battlefield to the warm tones of a love ballad to the mournful cries of a lament. In the five-part work, Chen devises the striking effect of a sustained sonority on the single pitch A. It appears frequently in this piece. The work opens with a quick orchestral burst of a loud tritone chord, followed by the sustained A. Against this background the pipa begins quietly with graceful short descending figures, as if revealing the interior

sound. The use of this familiar pipa trope also makes it intimate. The mood intensifies as a sweeping A resonating from all corners of the orchestra closes this section. The earlier mood disappears with the entry of the scherzo section, full of strumming on the pipa echoed by pizzicati in the strings and staccati in the winds. The witty character is continued by a small three-note ascending melodic figure on the pipa, playfully moving competitively either a minor or major second upward, in dialogue with similarly short figures from soloists in the orchestra. The playfulness is brought to a halt by a quick descending glissando to a loud chord in the low register. The third section begins with the pipa's expressive solo, full of repeated leaps of a seventh, which grows into the strings' lyrical melodies. The fourth section rushes in with fast figures and a return of earlier elements, including rhythmic strumming, harsher sonorities, glissando descent to loud chords, continuous tremolo on the pipa, and thicker orchestral texture, all full of momentum, producing a climax of chaotic sound. Expressively, the strings rise to A, which marks the beginning of the final section. A sequence of extended lyrical melodic gestures accompanied by harmonious sustained notes moves from one solo instrument to another. These exchanges bring the piece back to an intimate space. The sustained A finally enters and signals the move to closure as the piece ends in a celebrated unity.

In *Fantasia on the Theme of Guanglingsan*, Chen forms a fascinating relationship with a famous classic work, *Guanglingsan*, for *guqin*. Here it is played by *zheng*, a zither placed on a table in front of the player. *Guanglingsan* depicts a legend from the Warring States Period: The son of a swordsmith assassinated the draconian King of Han to avenge his father's murder. Fearing retaliation against his mother, he sacrificed himself to maintain anonymity. Yet, the grieving mother identified her son, insisting instead that his legend was

greater than her life. It was a grand, moral piece. Beginning with pensive, lyric (“civil”) style that evokes a feeling of melancholy, the classic work moves on to robust and vigorous (“martial”) style, finally ending with lyric style again, in a lament. For Chen, the two distinctive emotions made a deep impression: “The meditative character in the melody’s opening and ending provide a strong contrast to the fast, energetic music flanked within. Together, they suggest a rich, full range of musical expression and vitality.” The concerto follows the narrative, beginning quietly with fragments of the classic tune, then moving to the warrior-like section, and concluding with the full elegant melody from the original work.

Chen’s use of the traditional *Guanglingsan* in the concerto is highly nuanced. The mood and materials of the classic guqin work reverberate throughout the concerto, yet the new musical context releases new meaning from the older piece. At the center is the interaction between the notably different aesthetics of “civil” and “martial” styles, each being characterized by distinctive textures and timbres, as well as gestures and a sense of vocality and narrativity. From the civil style, Chen develops pensive characteristics. With rests separating individually articulated gestures, she reaches for the inner reflective voices. In contrast, the martial style is thick in texture, profuse in color, tight in structure, and full-bodied in sound. Its musical character reflects a vivid realism, with chords articulating animatedly the ups and downs of a dramatic process. Interestingly, Chen noted that while she normally conceptualizes the intercultural aesthetics from the perspective of Western instruments/genre, writing this concerto for Chinese orchestra prompted her to conceptualize the interculturalism from the perspective of Chinese instruments. She gestured to the tradition without replicating it. In other words, it is through

both her attachment to and detachment from the masterwork that the new meaning becomes released and the new work emerges.

Nanguan music is one of the most popular vernacular genres in Taiwan. Numerous amateur clubs have kept the genre alive for generations. It is known for its elegant and serene quality. The range of fluctuation in dynamics is kept small, but subtle timbral and dynamic changes occur throughout, and the elegant, stately atmosphere prevails. *Fantasia on the Theme of Plum Blossoms for String Orchestra* is originally scored for a string quartet. It is based on a Nanguan melody titled *Meibua Cao* (Virtues of Plum Blossoms). In Chinese culture, the plum blossom, known for thriving in severe winter snow to produce a beautiful flower, has long been the symbol of great fortitude or perseverance despite adverse conditions. The tripartite work follows the classic Nanguan structure: fantasia, ten thousand blooms, and plum blossoms. The first movement introduces the Nanguan melody in fragments and shorter motives, as if seen through the shadow of branches. It is anchored in the pitch of G. The lower strings form a strand whose fragmented melodies are in dialogue with the upper strings. With excitement and grace, the melodies grow longer and more continuous, stretching out to a spacious whole. A beautiful cadenza follows, as if gesturing to the grace of flowers in full bloom. The second (scherzo-like) movement is marked by a sharp opening chord. Playful and energetic, it creates a bustling mood of abundance, depicting the busy scene of lively and colorful blossoms. The third movement opens elegantly with the lyrical Nanguan melody in a contrapuntal texture. In accompaniment, the viola produces a lovely tremolo, akin to the timbre of Nangan’s southern pipa. In call-and-response, the melody continues to ascend, lingering in the high register in a gesture of solitude, until the piece closes on a soft G in both

extremes of the register. The *Meibua Cao* melody flows gracefully against the orchestral tapestry.

*A Plea to Lady Chang'e* represents a step in a new direction. Chen composed new music to an existing Nanguan piece in intuitive yet very attentive ways. A Nanguan ensemble typically consists of five instruments: pipa, *saxian* (three-string plucked lute), *dongxiao* (vertical end-blown flute), *erxian* (two-string bowed lute) and *paiban* (wooden clappers). In the Nanguan tradition, the singer claps the paiban to punctuate the meter while singing, with meticulous articulation of each word in melismatic melodies. Here, Chen scores it for the southern pipa and Western chamber ensemble. *A Plea* is a famous work in Nanguan classic repertoire. A melancholy piece, it depicts the inner feelings of sorrow, regret, and loneliness of a woman who waits for her lover's return. From the first phrase, the tune descends constantly, lethargically and sadly. The lyrics portray her rising from the bed on a sleepless night, wandering slowly, and leaning by the window. She poses a question to the goddess Chang'e, who resides in the moon, about the date of her lover's return. She laments her foregone and wasted youth. This popular song contains the essential expression and mood of the Nanguan genre. Composing for the southern pipa turned out to be a challenge for Chen. The aesthetics of this non-virtuosic instrument, different from its northern counterpart, required a reconceptualization of what is meant by "modernist technique." The three-part work begins with the pipa solo. The first two parts are instrumental only, with the pipa's gentle sonority woven smoothly into a subtle background of percussion instruments and pizzicato strings. Fragments of the tune can be heard in the distance. In the last part, accompanied by the pipa, the original song is sung gracefully and slowly by a Nanguan female singer, with the

orchestral timbre as its backdrop. The juxtaposition of the voice with the orchestra's lyrical lines gives a new interpretation to this classic.

*Silvergrass, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* has four movements, based on poems by Taiwanese writer Huang Chunming: "Silvergrass," "My Vegetarian and Sutra-incanting Grandmother," "Turtle Island," and "Guojun is Not Coming Home for Dinner." Huang's passion for depicting working-class and mundane daily activities has long resonated with Chen. These poems arouse in her the deepest nostalgia and profound empathy. Of the selection she writes, "the four poems share a similar duty devotion: the silvergrass' dutiful annual sweeping of the sky; the grandmother's daily chanting and vegetarian observances; a traveler whose emotion is tied to home, who changes the counting sheep chant to words about home; and the parents who keep a seat for their child who will not return." The cello solo represents the devotion of the dutiful, tireless silvergrass farmer, whose energetic melodies persist throughout the movement. On the orchestral canvas, the multi-directional glissandi of the strings depict the water, the phrases of a bright trumpet duet recall the open space, and the meticulously scored full-register tutti evokes the endless sky. Huang's poem on the grandmother's chanting is playful. The harp first sets the serene mood, then the cello enters playing a long melodic line meditatively, as if praying. The grace notes and slides that punctuate the melody and its numerous large ascending leaps give the melody an expressive character of earnest pleading. Meanwhile, the sonority of the Chinese temple block that typically accompanies sutra chanting is reproduced by a vibraphone, then playfully imitated on the viola and solo cello. The overall mood is at once solemn and mischievous, characteristic of a child's peek into her (or his) grandmother's daily worship routine.

The third movement is programmatic. From the beginning, the cello's continuous 32nd notes and dotted rhythm unmistakably conjure up the image of a train's engine. The rhythm recalls fragments from a Taiwanese folksong about a steam locomotive and train whistle. These fragments are woven into the sound fabric, sometimes even "properly" played by the horns. The incessant rhythm of the locomotive and this folksong—most people growing up in Taiwan would have sung the light-hearted piece in school choir—create a frisky mood that makes light of the homesickness. The train symbolizes travel and farewell, yet also signals the promise of return. The witty movement foretells the ultimately happy ending, a reunion. It is a perfect match to the nonchalant mood in Huang's poem, acknowledging the melancholy without being drawn into gloom. Gloom, however, is inescapable in the last movement: a tragedy. Huang's poem was written after his son's death. It depicts the despair through the ultimate symbol of family: the dinner table. The glockenspiel and chimes that open the movement sound like the grave striking of funeral bells in the distance. The crying tune of Taiwanese opera is played by the cello. Its expressive winding melody, whose overwhelming descending motion and downward glissando unmistakably express lament, is mostly confined to a narrow range. Sadness mounts as the crying tune persists over and over. Toward the end, the last thunderous chord of the full orchestra underscores the doom, followed by an outburst of tremolo and slides on the cello expressing the uncontrollable grief of the human heart. The cello concerto richly expresses respect for the everyday and the land, mischievous childhood, sweet nostalgia, and a parent's profound love.

Reflecting on the journey she took for these intercultural works, Chen notes, "My study of traditional music not only provided a more in-depth

understanding of the culture, it also lead me to develop different concepts about organizing, composing and notating sound." Clearly, her journey also unearthed the deep-seated sensibility of those long afternoons in the hotel lobby in Pa-Tu.

--Nancy Rao

*Nancy Yunhua Rao is a professor of music at Rutgers University. Her research includes sketch studies, the musical avant-garde, and intercultural music. She is the author of Chinatown Opera Theater in North America (2017), which received awards from the American Musicological Society and the Society for American Music.*

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Texts for *Silvergrass, for Cello and Chamber Orchestra*

Poems by Huang Chunming 黃春明

Translated by Tze-lan Sang 桑梓蘭

### ***Silvergrass***

Every year

The silvergrass never forgets to show up on this day

To sweep the sky

During daytime

By the brooks the silvergrass stands

Sweeping the sky blue

On tiptoes on mountaintops

it stands

Sweeping the sky high

Then it calls the sky swept blue and high

Autumn

At night  
The silvergrass  
stands  
By the creeks  
Dusting the stars bright  
On tiptoes on mountaintops  
Dusting the stars far  
Then it names the stars it dusted bright and far  
The Milky Way

An old farmer  
Who makes brooms  
With the sky-sweeping and star-dusting silvergrass  
Goes to the city to hawk them  
When the women show disbelief around him  
He just tells them to take a look  
Up at the sky

〈菅芒花〉  
每一年的這一天,菅芒花  
總不會忘記來打掃天空  
白天  
菅芒花站在水邊  
把天空掃得藍藍的  
菅芒花墊腳山巔  
把天空掃得高高的  
然後把這掃得

藍藍又高高的天空  
取個名字叫  
秋天

夜晚  
菅芒花站在水邊  
把星星擲得亮亮的  
菅芒花墊腳山巔  
把星星擲得遠遠的  
然後把這擲得  
亮亮又遠遠的星星  
取個名字叫星空

老農夫  
把掃過天空、擲過星星的菅芒花  
編成一把一把的掃把  
帶到城裏叫賣  
當圍觀的婦女表示懷疑  
老農夫就叫人抬頭看看  
天空

***My Vegetarian and Sutra-chanting Grandmother***  
Old Grandma has a Buddhist prayer hall decorated in red  
Adults say it is not a place where we kids should play  
The hall often overflows with Grandma's low singing

Out wafts the hum of recitations and the sharp scent of sandalwood  
Out comes the drone of incantations punctuated by the *knock knock ding* of  
the temple block and copper bell

A vegetarian, Grandma recites the sutras and performs good deeds  
She says the Buddha forbids killing  
That the Buddha prohibits this and that  
*Namo Amitabha knock knock ding*  
*Knock knock knock knock ding*

Grandma has a Buddhist prayer hall decorated all in red  
Inside is a red table  
On the table sits a stack of sutras bound in leather with embossed red and gold  
characters  
When she chants, she starts at the top with the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra  
And works her way down  
Until she reaches the Diamond Sutra  
Grandma chants  
*Namo Amitabha knock knock ding*  
*Knock knock knock knock ding*

When Grandma finishes chanting the Diamond Sutra  
She begins all over again with the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra  
She keeps incanting, working her way down  
*Namo Amitabha knock knock ding*

〈吃齋唸佛的老奶奶〉  
奶奶有一間紅紅的經堂

大人說,那不是小孩子玩耍的地方  
經常早晚傳出奶奶誦經聲喃喃  
誦經聲喃喃,飄出撲鼻的檀香  
誦經聲喃喃,帶著木魚銅鐘喀喀鏗  
喀喀喀鏗

奶奶吃齋唸佛勸行善  
她說,佛說不許殺生  
她說,佛說不許那樣和這樣  
南無阿彌陀佛喀喀鏗  
喀喀喀鏗

奶奶有一間紅紅的經堂  
紅紅的經堂有一張紅紅的經案  
經案上有一疊紅金燙皮的佛經  
奶奶從上面的波羅蜜多經  
一直唸,一直唸  
一直唸到下方的金剛經  
奶奶的誦經聲喃喃  
南無阿彌陀佛喀喀鏗  
喀喀喀鏗

奶奶唸完金剛經  
再從頭翻開波羅蜜多經  
一直唸,一直唸  
南無阿彌陀佛喀喀鏗

### ***Turtle Island***

Turtle Island

Whenever this child of Lanyang takes the train to travel faraway

Whenever he gazes upon you from the distance

He can never tell whether the melancholy in the air

Belongs to you or him

Turtle Island

On the days this child of Lanyang stayed away from his hometown

A multitude of dreams would cause insomnia

He dreamt of the Turbid River

Of Typhoons Pamela and Beth

Of you, Turtle Island

The doctor in the alien city

Taught him to count sheep

One sheep, two sheep, three sheep

Four Turbid River, five typhoon

Six Turtle Island

Ah Turtle Island

Whenever this child of Lanyang takes the train home

He can never tell whether the excitement and joy in the air

Belongs to you or him

〈龜山島〉

龜山島

每當蘭陽的孩子搭火車外出

當他從車窗望著你時

總是分不清空氣中的哀愁

到底是你的,或是他的

龜山島

蘭陽的孩子在外鄉的日子

多夢是他失眠的原因

他夢見濁水溪

他夢見颱風波蜜拉,貝絲

他夢見你,龜山島

外地的醫生教他數羊

一隻羊、兩隻羊、三隻羊

四隻濁水溪、五隻颱風

六隻龜山島

龜山島

每當蘭陽的孩子搭火車回來

當他從車窗望見你時

總是分不清空氣中的喜悅

到底是你的,或是他的

### ***Guojun Is Not Coming Home to Dinner***

Guojun, I know you are not coming home to dinner, so I ate first.

Your mom always says, wait a bit.

Because she ends up waiting too long, she loses her appetite.

That bag of rice is still full a great many days after we opened it. It even gained some weevils.

Since mom knows that you are not coming home to dinner, she no longer wants to cook.

She and the Tatung rice cooker have forgotten how many cups of water should go with a cup of rice.

Only now do I realize that mom was born to cook for you.  
Now that you do not come home to dinner, she has nothing left to do.  
She does not feel like doing anything, not even eating.  
Guojun, it has been a year—you have not come home to dinner.  
I have stir-fried rice noodles a few times to invite your friends over.  
Some of your best friends came, but Zhesheng, like you, also  
no longer goes home to dinner.  
Since we know you are not coming home to dinner,  
we do not wait for you, nor do we talk about you.  
But we will always save a seat  
for you.

〈國峻不回來吃飯〉  
國峻, 我知道你不回來吃晚飯,  
我就先吃了,  
媽媽總是說等一下,  
等久了, 她就不吃了,  
那包米吃了好久了, 還是那麼多,  
還多了一些象鼻蟲。  
媽媽知道你不回來吃飯, 她就不想燒飯了,  
她和大同電鍋也都忘了, 到底多少米要加多少水?  
我到今天才知道, 媽媽生下來就是為你燒飯的,  
現在你不回來吃飯, 媽媽什麼事都沒了,  
媽媽什麼事都不想做, 連吃飯也不想。  
國峻, 一年了, 你都沒有回來吃飯  
我在家炒過幾次米粉請你的好友,

來了一些你的好友, 但是哲生也跟你一樣,  
他也不回家吃飯了。  
我們知道你不回來吃飯;  
就沒有等你, 也故意不談你,  
可是你的位子永遠在那裡。

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A citation accompanying 陳士惠 **Shih-Hui Chen**'s Goddard Lieberson Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters states: "Among the composers of Asian descent living in the U.S.A., Shih-Hui Chen is most successful in balancing the very refined spectral traditions of the East with the polyphonic practice of Western art-music. In a seamless narrative, her beautiful music, always highly inventive and expressive, is immediately as appealing as it is demanding and memorable."

Born in Taiwan, Shih-Hui Chen has lived in the United States since 1982 and received her doctorate from Boston University. In addition to garnering a Koussevitzky Music Foundation Commission, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Harvard/Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Scholarship, a Fulbright Senior Scholarship, and an American Academy in Rome Prize, her compositions have been performed widely throughout the United States and abroad, including China, Japan, England, Germany, and Italy.

Chen serves on Asia Society Texas Center's Performing Arts & Culture Committee. She is the director of 21C: Contemporary Cross-Culture Asian Music Festival and a professor at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University.

Recent projects include *Echoes from Within*, a 50-minute, site-specific work for the Cy Twombly Gallery at the Menil Collection; *Withholding the Umbrella*, for the Chinese Orchestra; and *Messages from a Paiwan Village*, a 75-minute storytelling musical drama. Chen's music can be heard on Albany Records, New World Records, and Bridge Records.

Founded in 1945, the **National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra** (NTSO) is the oldest symphony orchestra in Taiwan. Since its establishment, it has been successively affiliated with the Taiwan Garrison Command, Taiwan Art Construction Association, Taiwan Provincial Department of Education, Department of Culture, Council for Cultural Affairs, and the Executive Yuan. In May of 2012, it came under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. The orchestra is located in Wufeng, Taichung. Over seventy years of history, under the directors of the past and the efforts of the current director Liu Suan-Yung, the NTSO has accumulated extensive performing experience. Countless international teams and musicians have been invited to perform with the NTSO. Since 2019, the internationally renowned conductor, Maestro Lan Shui, has taken on the position of the NTSO Principal Guest Conductor, cooperating with NTSO Director Liu to enrich artistic skills, innovate on tradition, deepen education, and promote aesthetics, thus enhancing the public's musical life.

**The Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra** ("LGCCO") was founded in 2000 by its artistic director/conductor Chih-Sheng Chen. Acclaimed for both technical and artistic proficiency, LGCCO breathes new life into an art form that has ancient roots. It currently offers approximately sixty concerts a year,

presenting both the full orchestra of over 100 musicians and smaller chamber ensembles, as well as large-scale interdisciplinary projects fusing theater and multimedia. LGCCO introduces young audiences to Chinese music through educational programs. It has toured in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, and collaborated with numerous international soloists and ensembles, including Amsterdam's Nieuw Ensemble (2014) and Canada's Turning Point Ensemble (2018). It has commissioned and premiered works from Chinese, Singaporean, Dutch, Korean, Mexican, American, Canadian, and Finnish composers.

**Loop38** is a collective of passionate musicians bringing new music to the heart of Houston. Founded in the spring of 2016 at Rice University, Loop38 specializes in creating contemporary classical music experiences, performing works for large ensemble—an instrumentation that allows the full timbral spectrum of an orchestra while also showcasing the virtuosic solo capabilities of its musicians. Its members hold degrees from top music schools from all over the world and have each used their unique experiences to inform their performances. Named after the 38-mile freeway ("the loop") that the musicians now identify as home, Loop38 focuses on bringing meaningful and memorable aural experiences of thoughtfully programmed music of living composers to Space City. The award-winning Formosa Quartet appeared as special guests on this recording.

**Chih-Sheng Chen** 陳志昇 is active on the international stage as a conductor, educator, and arts administrator, traversing the disciplines of Chinese music and contemporary music in both orchestral and chamber music settings. Chen founded the Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra (LGCCO) in Taiwan in 2000. He has produced and conducted close to one thousand concerts, including the LGCCO's

national and international tours, and a full season at the most prestigious venues in Taiwan. He has been a guest conductor in the Netherlands, Singapore, Canada, the United States, and China. Chen holds a master's degree in conducting from Taiwan's Fu Jen Catholic University and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Microbiology and Biochemistry at National Taiwan University.

Recognized for his dynamic presence, insightful interpretations, versatility, and commanding technique, Taiwanese-American conductor **Jerry Hou** 后正宇 is making his mark in concert halls in the United States and abroad. He has conducted the symphony orchestras of Dallas, Houston, and St. Louis, among others. A leading interpreter and conductor of contemporary music, he has collaborated with acclaimed composers including Steve Reich, György Kurtág, Unsuk Chin, Brett Dean, and Peter Eötvös. Hou has conducted the leading contemporary music ensembles Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Signal, and Remix Ensemble. He is on the faculty of the Shepherd School of Music, where he leads the contemporary ensemble and works with the symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, chamber music program, and opera.

**Hsin-Fang Hsu** 許馨方, an active, young zheng performer in Taiwan, has received numerous awards on the basis of her strict training, and been invited to perform in countries in Asia, the United States, and Canada. Hsu's musicianship especially emphasizes accuracy, with her pure and clean attack, that has created outstanding performances with unique charisma, whether she is a soloist or a chamber player.

Recognized as the world's premier pipa virtuoso and leading ambassador of Chinese music, **Wu Man** 吳蠻 is a soloist, educator, and composer who gives her

lute-like instrument a new role in both traditional and contemporary music. She has premiered hundreds of new works for the pipa, while spearheading multimedia projects to both preserve and create awareness of China's ancient musical traditions. She has performed in recital and as a soloist with major orchestras around the world, and has appeared on more than forty recordings throughout her career. Born in Hangzhou, China, Wu Man studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she became the first recipient of a master's degree in pipa. She was named Musical America's 2013 Instrumentalist of the Year, but the best measure of her achievement is that her instrument, which dates back 2000 years, is no longer an exotic curiosity.

**Mei-Hui Wei** 魏美慧, lead performer of Gang-a-Tsui Theater, is a prolific nanguan artist versatile in both traditional concert and theater styles. Since joining Gang-a-Tsui in 1993, Wei has toured extensively with the theater. Notable appearances include the International Nanguan Gala in Singapore, the Asian Traditional Arts Festival in South Korea, the International Traditional Dance Festival in Mexico, and three U.S. tours, as well as other appearances in Japan, Poland, and Indonesia. Wei received her master's degree in nanguan performance at the Taipei National University of the Arts. She has shared her nanguan experience and expertise and has joined the effort to preserve and define nanguan theory, history, and performance practice.

Taiwan-born conductor **Yao-Yu Wu** 吳曜宇 began his education at Taipei National University of Arts, and continued at the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Wien. In 2013, Wu won the Grand Prix de Direction (First Prize) of the 53rd Besançon International Competition for Young Conductors, as

well as Coup de Coeur L'Orchestre (Prize from the Orchestra) and Coup de Coeur du Public (Prize from the Public). Wu began his career by working with world-renowned orchestras, including the Orchestre National de Lorraine, the Orchestre National de Bordeaux, the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Taipei Symphony Orchestra. For his influence on young musicians, he was named by Performing Arts Magazine as a "2013 Person of the Year in Music," and nominated by the Taiwanese government as a candidate for Ten Outstanding Young Persons in 2014.

After winning first prize at the Geneva International Competition in 1991, Taiwanese-Swiss cellist **Wen-Sinn Yang** 楊文信 has made regular guest appearances in Taiwan, Japan, and the capitals of Europe. Alongside his activities as an internationally renowned soloist under conductors including Sir Colin Davis, Lorin Maazel, Mariss Jansons, Yukata Sado, and Michael Hofstetter, and with such orchestras as the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Shanghai Symphony, NHK Tokyo, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Russian State Orchestra of Moscow, Wen-Sinn Yang is also a highly sought-after chamber music partner. Yang's broad repertoire is well-documented on more than thirty CDs. These include not only the principal works for violoncello by Boccherini, Haydn, Beethoven, and Dvořák, but also compositions by Henri Vieuxtemps, Frank Martin, Leonid Sabaneev and Sofia Gubaidulina. Many of these are distinguished as premiere recordings. Mr. Yang currently teaches at the Musikhochschule Munich.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

*66 Times "The Voice of Pines and Cedars."* Elisabeth Weigle, soprano; Wu Man, pipa; Min-Ho Yeh, clarinet; Fischer Duo; Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Gil Rose, conductor. Albany Records 858.

*Remembrance.* Hsin-Yun Huang, viola; Evergreen Symphony Orchestra, Gernot Schmalfuss, conductor. Bridge Records 9387.

*Returning Souls.* Cho-Liang Lin, violin; Formosa Quartet; Timothy Jones, baritone; Timothy Peters, violin; Ben Odhner, violin; Bion Tsang, cello; Norman Fischer, cello, narrator; Coleman Itzkoff, cello; Michael Webster, clarinet; Leone Buyse, flute; Nuiko Wadden, harp; Matthew McClung, percussion; Robert Schulz, percussion; Brandon Bell, percussion; Jeanne Kierman Fischer, piano; David Cho, Kevin Noe, conductors. New World Records 80746.

*Fantasia on the Theme of Guanglingsan for Zheng and Chinese Orchestra* was recorded in concert in August 2017 at the National Theater and Concert Hall, Taipei. Recording engineer: Chao-Hui Wang.

*A Plea to Lady Chang'e for Nanguan Pipa and Chamber Orchestra* was recorded in concert in October 2016 at the Duncan Recital Hall, Shepherd School of Music, Rice University, Houston. Recording engineer: Todd Hulslander

*Fantasia on the Theme of Plum Blossoms for String Orchestra, Concerto for Pipa and Chamber Orchestra* and *Silvergrass for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* were recorded September 2019 in the concert hall at the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, Wufeng, Taiwan. Recording engineer: Chao-Hui Wang.

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