

ASIAN MASTERS ENCOUNTER
THE WESTERN TRADITION:
STANFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

JINDONG CAI, CONDUCTOR

SOLOISTS:

AERI JI, GAYAGEUM
SHA YUAN, GU-ZHENG
KAZUE SAWAI, KOTO
NATHAN CHEUNG, PIANO

DINKELSPIEL AUDITORIUM
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4
8:00 P.M.

PRE-CONCERT DISCUSSION:

CONDUCTOR JINDONG CAI AND GUEST ARTISTS AT 7:00 P.M.

PROGRAM

I

Concerto for Gayageum and Orchestra: *Spring Snow* (1991)

ByungKi Hwang

- I. *A Calm Morning*
- II. *Peacefully*
- III. *Mysteriously*
- IV. *Humorously*
- V. *Cheerfully*

AERI JI, 17 string developed gayageum

II

The Lament of Rainbow Cloud
for Chinese gu-zheng and orchestra

Yiguo Zhou
arr: Sha Yuan

SHA YUAN, gu-zheng

III

Concerto for Koto and Orchestra (1985)

Takashi Kako

KAZUE SAWAI, koto

INTERMISSION

IV

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26 (1913–1921)

Sergei Prokofiev

- I. *Andante – Allegro*
- II. *Tema con variazioni*
- III. *Allegro, ma non troppo*

NATHAN CHEUNG, piano

TO ENSURE A MORE PLEASANT EXPERIENCE FOR ALL: No food, drink, or smoking is permitted in the building. Cameras and other recording equipment are prohibited. Please ensure that your phone, other electronic devices, or watch alarm are all turned off. **AN ADDITIONAL NOTE TO PARENTS:** We appreciate your effort in bringing your children to a live music performance. Out of respect for other audience members and the performers, we count on you to maintain their quiet and attentive behavior. Thank you.

PROGRAM NOTES

BYUNGKI HWANG: *Saebom (Spring Snow)*

The traditional *gayageum* has 12 strings. *Spring Snow* was ByungKi Hwang's first composition for an enlarged, 17-string *gayageum*, an instrument that has since grown in popularity, along with still-larger *gayageums* having up to 25 strings. The additional strings extend the range of the instrument while retaining a pentatonic tuning. Like several of Hwang's works, *Spring Snow* makes reference to feelings and experiences from childhood — in this case, the childlike joy evoked by the beauty of snow falling on a village in early spring. According to the lunar calendar traditionally used in Korea, spring begins before the New Year, when the weather is still cold. The five movements proceed from slow to fast, as in traditional *sanjo*, a genre that also provides some of the rhythmic and melodic patterns used.

YIGUO ZHOU: *The Lament of Rainbow Cloud*

This piece was inspired by an original poem, *Melody of Qing Ping*, by Li Bai, a well-known poet during the Tong Dynasty. The piece is in the traditional Chinese music style known as *Qin Qiang*, from the province of Shan Xi. This style is melancholic and graceful — in this case, telling a dramatic love story that is both beautiful and tragic.

TAKASHI KAKO: *Concerto for Koto and Orchestra*

Simplicity is the subject of this piece. I have tried to create a simplified structure rather than a complicated one with many voices and subdivisions. I wanted to express the sonic images in my mind as simply as possible, quite different from the conceptions of progression and retrogression, or the old and the new. I also hoped to create an expressive energy that often results from that simplicity. This piece consists of two parts that are performed continuously. The first part consists of a "breathing image,"

while the second is an ostinato incantation. *Concerto for Koto and Orchestra*, a type of international encounter between the *koto* and the symphonic orchestra, was premiered in 1985.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV: *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26*

Prokofiev is one of the greatest of a number of brilliant Russian composers to emerge from the 19th century onwards, and the *Third Piano Concerto* is one of his most popular works. Indeed, the genre of the piano concerto played an important role in ensuring Prokofiev's rapid rise in the star-studded world of Russian music. After completing his composition studies at the St. Petersburg under Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev focused on the piano and conducting. In the spring of 1914, he took his final exams in both these disciplines and created a stir, both as a composer and pianist, by winning first prize for his piano performance; the piece he performed was his *First Piano Concerto*.

Even before he gave the première of the *First Piano Concerto*, Prokofiev had started sketching, in 1913, the slow movement of a piece that was to be eventually completed in 1921: his *Third Piano Concerto*. He began with the central slow movement and worked intermittently on the piece during 1916–17. After the 1918 Revolution, Prokofiev left Russia indefinitely; heading eastwards, Prokofiev crossed the Pacific to San Francisco and, eventually, Chicago, where the Grand Opera and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra gave the first performances of his opera *The Love for Three Oranges* and the *Third Piano Concerto* respectively within days of each other. Prokofiev conducted the première of the opera and was the soloist for the première of his concerto, which took place on 16 December 1921. He went on to make an impressive recording of it in 1932 as the solo pianist, with the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Piero Coppola.

The first movement begins with a slow melancholy theme (marked *andante*) for solo clarinet, which is joined by another clarinet and then the orchestral violins, before the tempo suddenly quickens to an *allegro* that establishes the C Major tonality and introduces the pianist, who begins with a new theme bristling with energy. The *allegro* soon reaches a climax before there is a sudden change of mood, leading to a new, contrasting theme — half-lyrical, half-sarcastic — played by the oboe and then the clarinet over chords strummed by the piano. The oboe theme is further elaborated by the piano, and then the frenetic mood takes over once again, a grand restatement of the slow melancholy theme of the opening, this time using the full orchestra, ushers in the recapitulation. The movement is brought to a brilliant finish by the piano and the orchestra.

The second movement is constructed as a set of five variations around a somewhat wistful theme, marked *andantino*, for flute and clarinet. The first variation is introduced by a glissando on the piano, and shares the slowish tempo of the theme. The second variation, an *allegro*, shatters the mood with the trumpet blaring out the theme over dissonant harmonies as the pianist plays a cascade of brilliant figurations; the rest of the orchestra plays snatches of the theme. The third variation

slows down the tempo slightly to an *allegro moderato*, in which the piano restates the theme in triplets. After these variations, the fourth, *andante meditativo*, brings to the foreground the mood of lyric, introspective melancholy that is never far below the apparently extrovert and flashy passages elsewhere in the concerto; in this variation, the orchestra sustains an eerie, nocturnal mood, as the piano's filigree work shines through like the twinkling of stars in the sky on a dark, clear night. The fifth variation, marked *allegro giusto*, brings back the mood of excited, nervous activity of the concerto's faster passages, until the very end of this movement, where the delicate mood returns, bringing the movement to a quiet close.

The third movement, marked *allegro ma non troppo* ("fast but not too much so"), begins with a comic theme for the bassoons, which the piano takes up with a flourish. So do different instruments of the orchestra, resulting in a virtuoso interplay between them and the piano. Once again, a shift of mood occurs when the oboe and the clarinet introduce a new theme, leading to another wry, march-like theme played very softly by the solo piano. Violins then take up the oboe-clarinet theme as the piano returns to the introspective, nocturnal mood of the previous movement, but it is with a display of virtuosic fireworks that the piano and the orchestra bring the concerto to its exuberant close. — *Suddhaseel Sen*