



Gordon  
CHIN

Symphony No. 3 'Taiwan'  
Cello Concerto No. 1

Wen-Sinn Yang, Cello

Taiwan Philharmonic • Shao-Chia Lü



## Gordon Chin (b. 1957)

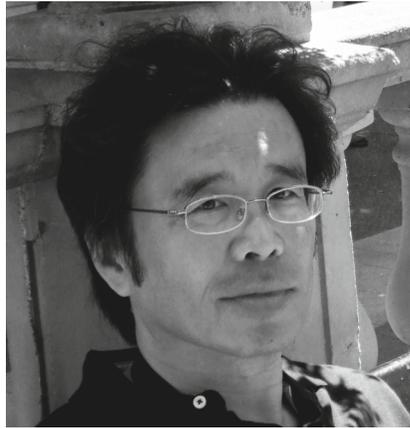
### Symphony No. 3 'Taiwan' • Cello Concerto No. 1

Born in 1957, Gordon Chin has established himself as one of the most prolific and sought-after composers in his native Taiwan. Chin's repertoire includes four symphonies, a cantata, an opera, three violin concertos, a triple concerto, a double concerto, a cello concerto, a piano concerto, numerous choral works, chamber works, five percussion quartets, and various works for solo instruments. Chin was born in Taiwan, spent his teenage years in Japan, and earned his doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Samuel Adler, Warren Benson and Christopher Rouse.

Chin has been honoured by numerous commissions from major ensembles and institutions in North America, Asia and Europe. In 2013 his *Triple Concerto* was given its première in Taiwan, his clarinet quintet *Cry Out* was performed in Tokyo, and the piano quintet *Moon Light Sorrow* was performed at Lincoln Center. In 2014 the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan gave the première of a symphonic work *The Dance of Mata* in Taipei, and the Northwest Sinfonietta gave the first performance of his orchestral piece *Fantasy on Theme Remembrance* in Seattle. During the summer of 2014, he led the combined forces of Yin-Qi and the Tokyo-based Euodia Chorus and Orchestra in a concert tour of Japan.

An album featuring Chin's *Formosa Seasons* and his *Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra* conducted by Michael Stern with Cho-Liang Lin and Felix Fan as soloists was released on Naxos 8.570221 in 2007.

Chin currently serves as Music Director of the Yin-Qi Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in Taipei, and is a faculty member at the National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU).



### Symphony No. 3 'Taiwan' (1996)

Gordon Chin's *Symphony No. 3* was commissioned by and composed for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra of Canada. The work was completed and first performed in 1996. Nick-named 'Taiwan', the *Symphony* was conceived after I had read several books on the history of the island, and it was written as a result of my decision to return home after a period of living overseas. In my mind, the Taiwanese have suffered long periods of catastrophe: the island has been the target of hostility and manipulation by foreign powers, and commercial interests have dominated the public scene for decades, impairing the development of culture and independent thought.

The work is in traditional tripartite fast-slow-fast form, each movement bearing a title:

#### I. Plunder

The first movement, entitled *Plunder*, depicts the various invasions by foreign powers, and the inevitable result of the feeling of helplessness of the people. Here I do not incorporate any traditional musical form; the movement is united by several motives, sometimes intersecting, while there are occasions for independent development of each element, gathering enough momentum to act as a powerful force when they are combined. The major motives are outlined as follows:

Tragic motive: announced at the beginning by timpani.



Short retreat: many general pauses for the orchestra are introduced; the rests signify a short period of relaxation from the plundering.

Plunder Motive I:



This motive develops into a more aggressive Plunder Motive II:



Crying for Help:



As the movement develops there are changes in tempo, and hence the mood, yet the shape of the motives remains essentially the same. For example, there is a middle section entitled "*Dance of Evil*", yet the materials are based on the two "*Plunder Motives*" and the "*Crying for Help*" motive. The movement concludes with a section of great tension, to be followed by the clarinet playing the "*Crying for Help*" motive, in the form of a *diminuendo*.

#### II. Dark Night

*Flowers in the Rainy Night* is a popular folk-song that perhaps best expresses the feelings of previous generations of Taiwanese. The slow movement oscillates around this folk-tune, occasionally punctuated by raging, roaring chords. The words of this popular folk-song are summarized as follows:

Flowers in the rainy night,  
Flowers in the rainy night,  
Are blown to the ground by wind and rain.  
Seen by no one,  
But only mourn helplessly,  
As the flowers wither, fall and never return.

Rain dropping,  
Rain dropping,  
Leads you to a pool of torture.  
How to call you?  
Flowers are now separate from leaves and branches,  
Never to be seen.

#### III. Upsurge

Foreign aggression could not intimidate the people of Taiwan, as they struggled for a better future and to rise out of darkness in a positive manner.

This movement has four sections – AA'BA" – the only slow section being the "B" element. The first section comprises the following motives:

"Struggle" Motive: comprising a series of running semi-quavers representing struggle.



The following motive is analogous to germs, which permeate and expand, and is a vital element of the movement. It can dominate the music, but can also retreat into the background as accompaniment; sometimes it develops and becomes melodies of different characters.



When the "Crying for Help" motive appears, the "Struggle" motive subsides into the background, so as to allow the former motive to assume a more prominent rôle.



This is also the main motive of the first movement; the only difference is that it assumes more brightness and power. The first section relaxes slightly as the "Struggle" motive subsides, but it resumes the original momentum in the second section, when the same motive regains power, leading to the following "Upsurge" motive.

"Upsurge" Motive:



This is followed by a forceful and stern version of the "Crying for Help" motive, and the motives for "Struggle" and "Upsurge", the latter featuring percussion instruments, creating the first climax, and implying great success of the people. The mood of the music, however, turns sharply when entering the middle section, where the melody of *Flowers in the Rainy Night* appears, accompanied by a slower version of the "Upsurge" motive, reminding the audience that Taiwan has not achieved what it should have. The final section features the "Struggle" and "Upsurge" motives, with the latter introduced by percussion instruments. This is followed by a faster version of the "Crying for Help" motive, and a reappearance of the "Tragic" motive of the first movement, inferring the difficulty of eliminating the shadow of tragic events in Taiwan's past. The movement concludes in a heroic mood, signifying the struggle of the people of Taiwan.

### Cello Concerto No. 1 (2006)

My *Cello Concerto No. 1* was commissioned by the Chi-Lin Education Foundation, and was completed and first performed in 2006 by the cellist Felix Fan and the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, under the baton of Ohyama Heichiro at the National Concert Hall, Taipei.

The work is in traditional three-movement form, fast-slow-fast, but in fact each movement has a composite structure. For example, there are three slow sections in the fast first movement, while the slow second movement begins with a fast section, and there is a *Largo* section, and a *Recitative* in the fast last movement. Despite these composite structures, the *Concerto* has the same spirit as a work from the Classical period.

The following quotations may help better explain the meaning of each movement; and while they are not literal translations they should help to elucidate the mood of the music:

### I. Allegro

"When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools."

– Shakespeare: *King Lear*

"Give me life."

– Shakespeare: *Falstaff*

### II. Dreams trapped inside the Mirror

"The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me."

– Pascal

### III. After Great Pain

"Reason deserts us at the brink of the grave, and can give  
no further intelligence.

– Samuel Johnson

**Gordon Chin**

### Wen-Sinn Yang



Photo: wildundleise.de

In 1989, at the age of 24, Wen-Sinn Yang became principal cellist of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra where he stayed until 2005 when he was offered a chair at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Munich. In 1991 he won first prize at the Geneva International Music Competition. Since then he has performed in many concerts all over the world, making use of the opportunity to promote twentieth-century music. Yang has worked with many conductors including Lorin Maazel, Sir Colin Davis, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Semyon Bychkov, Yuri Termirkanov and Mariss Jansons. Invitations from orchestras have taken him to Europe, Canada and

the Far East. Wen-Sinn Yang has made over thirty CD recordings, including the cello concertos of Haydn, Dvořák and Boccherini and the entire chamber music works of Aribert Reimann. There is also a CD/DVD box of Bach's *Cello Suites* recorded in a pilgrimage church in Bavaria in conjunction with Bavarian television.

## Taiwan Philharmonic

Photo: Raymond Huang



Founded in 1986, the Taiwan Philharmonic, also known as the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO), is hailed as one of the best orchestras in the Asian region. The 99-member NSO became the resident orchestra of the National Concert Hall and an artistic affiliate of the National Performing Arts Center in April 2014. Since August 2010, Shao-Chia Lü has been Music Director of the NSO and leads the orchestra in its mission to become the flagship ensemble for classical music in Taiwan. The NSO has worked with internationally acclaimed conductors, including Jahja Ling, Wen-Pin Chien, Günther Herbig, Lorin Maazel, Krzysztof Penderecki, Rudolf Barshai, Gerard Schwarz, Michael Sanderling, Leonard Slatkin, Christopher Hogwood, Gennady Rozhdestvensky and many others. Tour performances are also offered regularly throughout Taiwan and overseas, in places such as Vienna, Paris, Berlin, Geneva, Milan, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Sapporo, Tokyo, Yokohama, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing.

## Shao-Chia Lü

Photo: Yung-Nien Wang



Shao-Chia Lü, music director of the National Symphony Orchestra (Taiwan Philharmonic) since August 2010 and principal conductor of the South Denmark Philharmonic since 2014, studied in Taipei, at Indiana University and the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, going on to win first prize at renowned conducting competitions in Bensençon, Trento and Amsterdam. He has held posts in Koblenz (1998-2004) and at the Staatsoper Hannover (2001-2006) in addition to appearing as guest conductor with the major opera houses of Berlin, Sydney, Brussels, Oslo and Stuttgart, and with numerous orchestras throughout Europe and Asia, including the Royal Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Orchestre National de France, the Oslo Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the NHK Orchestra in Tokyo, and leading orchestras in China.

Gordon Chin is one of Taiwan's leading composers, and increasingly honoured by commissions and performances from major ensembles in North America, Asia and Europe. Featuring an array of exotic Chinese percussion instruments, *Symphony No. 3 'Taiwan'* is a dramatically powerful work cast in three movements which explore his native country's turbulent history. Specific literary quotations from Shakespeare, Blaise Pascal and Samuel Johnson elucidate the expressive moods of the three-movement *Cello Concerto No. 1*.



# GORDON CHIN

(b. 1957)

## **Cello Concerto No. 1 (2006)\*** **35:44**

- |          |   |              |
|----------|---|--------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>I. Allegro</b>                           | <b>13:29</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>II. Dreams trapped inside the Mirror</b> | <b>10:37</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>III. After Great Pain</b>                | <b>11:38</b> |

## **Symphony No. 3 'Taiwan' (1996)** **26:28**

- |          |                       |             |
|----------|-----------------------|-------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>I. Plunder</b>     | <b>9:32</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>II. Dark Night</b> | <b>8:40</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>III. Upsurge</b>   | <b>8:16</b> |

**WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS**

**\*Wen-Sinn Yang, Cello**

**Taiwan Philharmonic • Shao-Chia Lü**

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