

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text are three stylized white columns, and below it are three horizontal lines. The background of the entire image is a photograph of a sunset over a mountain range, with a pine branch in the top left corner and some foliage in the bottom right corner.

NAXOS

**Nai-Chung
KUAN**

(b. 1939)

Memory of Mountain

**Joel
HOFFMAN**

(b. 1953)

Nautilus Symmetry

**Violin Concerto No. 2
'Snow in Spring'**

Cho-Liang Lin, Violin

Taipei Chinese Orchestra • Li-Pin Cheng

Nai-Chung Kuan (b. 1939): Memory of Mountain

Joel Hoffman (b. 1953): Nautilus Symmetry · Violin Concerto No. 2 ‘Snow in Spring’

Nai-Chung Kuan

Born in Beijing in 1939, Nai-Chung Kuan studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in the same city, where he graduated in 1961. His remarkable career spans many decades, and he has held numerous prestigious positions including conductor of the China Oriental Song and Dance Troupe and the Kaohsiung City Chinese Orchestra, music director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra and laureate conductor of Hua Xia Chinese Orchestra of the China Conservatory of Music. As a composer, Kuan has written over a hundred works, with major pieces including four symphonies, twenty concertos for various types of instruments, fifteen orchestral pieces, three dance dramas and three symphonic choral works. His symphonic suite *Journey to Lhasa* won the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong (CASH) Golden Sail Most Performed Works Awards – Local Serious Work category three times. Other compositions such as *Festive Lanterns* and *Bumper Harvest* have also won the same award. His symphonic poem *The Peacock* was rated a 20th Century Chinese Music Classic by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra.

Memory of Mountain (1991) (version for violin and Chinese orchestra, arr. 2016)

This work was originally a three-movement banhu concerto, created for my old friend, Lu-Feng Ding. This version has been re-arranged into a violin concerto. The work, inspired by the magnificent scenery and rich culture in the Alishan mountains of Taiwan, features three scenic topics: *The Sacred Tree in the Fog*, *The Train in the Mountain Forest* and *Celebrating a Good Harvest Year*.

The Sacred Tree in the Fog: The movement depicts the sacred tree standing vigorous and straight in the fog throughout the passage of time, a spirit symbol for the native tribe. It begins with a sequence of discords played by the high-pitched string instruments, vertical flute and xylophone, suggesting the mist lingering in the mountains.

The violin solo enters as though the ancient tree was emerging out of the mist. The violin melody refers to the aboriginal folk tunes, freely formed in a colloquial style, similar to the Western recitative. While the accompaniment is softly played by the plucked and low-pitched instruments, paigu and timpani, it has a lively vibe. In the middle section, the music turns muscularly explosive, before returning to calmness at the end.

The Train in the Mountain Forest: In contrast to the first movement, the second movement is like a spring breeze. The music begins by imitating the sound of a train, while the violin solo mimics the train horn blowing from a distance. We then hear the violin melodically corresponding with the orchestra, as if the two are enjoying the journey. In the first section, I use the violin, erhu and zhonghu, as well as pipa and liuqin to imitate the timbre of a kouxian, a native instrument. The second *lento* section follows as the melody is sweetly played by violin.

Celebrating a Good Harvest Year: This movement is like a cultural sketch. Four timpani drums, divided into three parts, imitate the spontaneous harmony of the native chorus, with the violin playing the role of the lead singer. The timpani and paigu then combine forces, and a scene of harvest celebration unfolds. They are joined by the xylophone in bold patterns that imitate the sound of a rice pestle dance. Upon reaching the climax, the melody sounds solemn, indicating the native peoples' appreciation of the spirits.

During my visit to Alishan, I was amazed by the Catholic church standing tall in the remote mountains. This work gives an insight into the emotional response this prompted: if humanity finds peace, perhaps the world will become as serene as this special place.

Nai-Chung Kuan

Joel Hoffman

Joel Hoffman's music draws from such diverse sources as Eastern European folk music, Chinese traditional music and American bebop, and is pervaded by a sense of lyricism and rhythmic vitality. A 2017 Guggenheim Fellow, Hoffman was born in Vancouver, Canada in 1953 and completed graduate studies at The Juilliard School. Currently a resident of New York City, he was professor of composition at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati for 36 years. Hoffman spends four months each year in Beijing, where he is special professor at the China Conservatory of Music. Hoffman has received awards from many institutions including the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Endowment for the Arts, Columbia University and the American Music Center. He has been composer-in-residence with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Philharmonic in Washington. He has been awarded residencies at The Rockefeller, The Camargo and Hindemith Foundations, MacDowell Colony, Yaddo and Copland House. Hoffman's orchestral compositions have been performed by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Kiev Chamber Orchestra, Slovenian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Israel Chamber Orchestra among many others. His chamber music has been performed by such groups as the Cleveland, Brentano, Ariel, Amernet, Pro Arte and Shanghai Quartets, members of the Berlin Philharmoniker and the Golub-Kaplan-Carr Trio. Hoffman has been commissioned by dozens of individuals and organisations including the Tanglewood Music Festival, Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass, Fromm Music Foundation, Chinese Bamboo Flute Orchestra and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Hoffman's music is regularly heard in venues such as the Southbank Centre in London, the City Hall in Hong Kong and the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

www.joelhoffman.net

Nautilus Symmetry (2018)

Nautilus Symmetry is my first work for full Chinese orchestra and it came about as a result of my being awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2017. The Guggenheim Foundation recognises artists and scholars in a number of fields and, as I understand it, their mission is to support major creative and scholarly works that have the potential to make significant contributions in the recipients' chosen fields. While not completely unprecedented, it is certainly very unusual for a Western composer to compose a large-scale work for Chinese orchestra. Therefore, I understood my task to be an especially important one, which I hoped would not only result in a worthwhile piece of music but would also serve as a model for other Western composers.

As with the my other work for Chinese orchestra, my violin concerto *Snow in Spring*, I was especially focused on the section of plucked string instruments in the Chinese orchestra, for which there is no analogous section in the Western orchestra. Since the plucked instruments cannot play anywhere near as loudly as the instruments of the other sections of the Chinese orchestra, this meant that large parts of my piece would consist of soft and delicate music, and also that the loudest instruments – especially the percussion – would have to be used sparingly.

The title refers to a structure I used in organising the large-scale form of this piece. The geometric structure of the nautilus shell is one of the wonders of nature, and variations of it can be found all around both the natural and man-made worlds. In my piece, I have used the physical proportions of the nautilus shell to govern lengths of time, and so the symmetry of the shell's design is reflected in symmetrical time structures of the various materials of the composition.

One other feature of *Nautilus Symmetry* worth mentioning: exactly in the middle of the piece, I quote a melody from traditional Chinese repertoire. The classical Chinese music and dance form called *Xiang He Ge* (相和歌)

goes back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD). A particular form of *Xiang He Ge* is called *Pangu Wu* (盤鼓舞), which means that the dancers dance on drums in the shape of plates. Apparently *Pangu Wu* (盤鼓舞) was very popular during that time.

One of the famous poems of this historical period, from the 詩經 ('Shijing' – 'Book of Odes'), is 子衿 (zǐ jīng) ('The Blue Collar'). It describes a young lady revealing her love to her admirer, and her frustration that he does not contact her. She keeps thinking about him, and is obsessed with the blue collar of his jacket and a piece of equally blue jewellery that he wears.

The melody I quote in my piece is traditionally associated with 子衿 (zǐ jīng). It is an extraordinarily beautiful melody and it represents the quiet interior around which the piece sits in a symmetrical time structure.

Violin Concerto No. 2 'Snow in Spring' (2018)

My second violin concerto, *Snow in Spring*, was completed in December 2018. It is my second work for Chinese orchestra, after *Nautilus Symmetry* (鸚鵡螺的對稱), which was completed six months earlier. In both pieces, my aim was not to write 'Chinese music' or 'Western music for Chinese instruments', and especially not to express the idea of 'East meets West'. Instead, my aim was the same as I have always had with every instrument for which I have composed since I was a child: to try to find my own voice inside of these instruments.

In the case of the Chinese orchestra, I have been especially fascinated by the extraordinary collection of plucked instrument sounds (ruan, guzheng, pipa, sanxian, etc.) for which there is no corollary in the Western orchestra except for the Western string instruments when plucked. In comparison, the Chinese plucked instruments offer a much wider and more colourful range of sound and I knew that my best ideas for Chinese orchestra would inevitably centre around plucked instrument sounds. I also knew that my best ideas for Chinese orchestra would

not come from 'translating' from the Western orchestra but rather from thinking inside the logic of the Chinese orchestra's structure. These are the reasons why my Chinese orchestra pieces sound very different from my many pieces for Western orchestra.

Both movements of the concerto focus on two things: the first is a series of nine chords and the second is a traditional Chinese melody – one for each of the two movements. Listeners familiar with well-known traditional melodies will probably recognise both. Although these melodies attracted me with their subject matter as well as their history, I am primarily interested in their musical quality – I think both melodies are wonderful and especially well-suited for the violin, although the first movement's melody is usually played on the xiao and the second movement's melody is usually played on the pipa. The title of the concerto – *Snow in Spring* – is the title of the melody found in the second movement.

The nine chords act as a kind of backbone for the concerto, providing large-scale structure as well as contrast to the traditional melodies. The chords can be heard all in a row at the beginning of the first movement, as well as at the beginning and just before the end of the second movement.

Violin Concerto No. 2 'Snow in Spring' is dedicated with affection to Cho-Liang Lin, a superb musician and friend of many, many years.

Joel Hoffman

A Chinese version of these notes can be accessed at www.naxos.com/notes/574180.htm



Nai-Chung Kuan



Joel Hoffman

Cho-Liang Lin



Cho-Liang Lin is an internationally renowned performer, a creator and curator of music festivals and a teacher. Recent concert engagements include numerous solo appearances worldwide with prestigious orchestras. Born in Taiwan, Lin studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music before enrolling at The Juilliard School at the age of 15, where he was invited to join the faculty in 1991. In 2000 *Musical America* magazine named him 'Instrumentalist of the Year'. He joined Rice University as professor of violin in 2006. An advocate of contemporary music, Lin has enjoyed collaborations and premieres with composers such as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Joan Tower and John Williams. Lin was music director of La Jolla Music Society SummerFest for 18 years, serves as artistic director of Beare's Premiere Music Festival, and recently created the Taipei Music Academy and Festival. Lin's extensive discography, for which he has received two GRAMMY Award nominations, includes critically acclaimed solo recordings for Sony Classical, Decca, Ondine, Naxos and BIS. On this recording Lin plays the 1715 'Titian' Stradivarius and a 2000 Samuel Zygmuntowicz violin. www.cholianglin.com

Taipei Chinese Orchestra



The Taipei Chinese Orchestra (TCO), founded in 1979, is the first professional Chinese orchestra in Taiwan. Tun-Chu Chen, Tscheng-Hsiung Chen, Cheng-Ping Wang and Yiu-Kwong Chung have served as director, a position currently held by Li-Pin Cheng. Under the previous and current leadership of directors and music directors including Cheng-Ping Wang, En Shao and current principal conductor Chunquan Qu, the TCO has earned an international reputation with innovative and adventurous programming that redefines Chinese music, establishing its unique style and artistic excellence. In line with its slogan, 'Let You Hear The World', the TCO

not only focuses on the Chinese classics. It collaborates with various virtuosos to introduce a wide range of music from all over the world and subsequently develop a new form of Chinese music. It extensively explores crossover performances to bring novel experiences to audiences, ensuring a sustainable development of Chinese music. The TCO's concert tours have been acclaimed in more than 20 countries across Asia, Europe and the Americas. It is the first Chinese orchestra to be featured on the roster of international art agencies. In February 2011, the TCO embarked on a tour of the United States, and in November 2018 performed at Carnegie Hall – the first professional orchestra from Taiwan to perform at the venue.

Li-Pin Cheng



As one of the most prominent conductors in Taiwan, Li-Pin Cheng is noted for his vast repertoire and profound musical interpretations. His expertise in rehearsal direction has made him very popular among orchestral musicians. Cheng has served as guest conductor for numerous Chinese and Western orchestras. Recurring invitations from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan and the United States illustrate his unique qualities and credibility of conducting both Chinese and Western music. Moreover, Cheng is dedicated to promoting works by Taiwanese composers, programming many of their works during his tenure as music director/principal conductor of the Taipei Philharmonic Youth Orchestra between 2004 and 2015. Cheng was awarded the Best Interpretation – Conductor and Best Album Producer prizes at the Golden Melody Award for Traditional Arts and Music. From 2007 to 2015, Cheng was the associate professor at the Chinese Music Department of the Chinese Culture University. Since 2015, he has served as the general director of the Taipei Chinese Orchestra, leading the Orchestra in discovering new artistic horizons.

Nai-Chung Kuan's *Memory of Mountain*, originally a banhu concerto and here recast for the violin, is inspired by the magnificent scenery and culture of Taiwan's Alishan mountains, and explores three scenic topics employing native instruments to great effect. Joel Hoffman's music draws from such diverse sources as Eastern European folk music and American bebop, remaining full of lyricism and rhythmic vitality. *Nautilus Symmetry*, his first work for full Chinese orchestra, and *Violin Concerto No. 2 'Snow in Spring'*, display a love of plucked string instruments and traditional Chinese melodies expressed in a style that is recognisably his own.

Nai-Chung
KUAN
(b. 1939)

Memory of Mountain (1991)

(version for violin and Chinese orchestra, arr. 2016)

29:47

1 I. The Sacred Tree in the Fog

8:21

2 II. The Train in the Mountain Forest

10:24

3 III. Celebrating a Good Harvest Year

10:49

Joel
HOFFMAN
(b. 1953)

4 **Nautilus Symmetry** (2018)

25:02

Violin Concerto No. 2 'Snow in Spring' (2018)

22:36

5 I. Andante

12:58

6 II. Allegro

9:31

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Cho-Liang Lin, Violin 1–3 5–6

Taipei Chinese Orchestra • Li-Pin Cheng

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