



DECEMBER
CHRYSANTHEMUM

Chamber Music of
Xiaogang Ye

Les Temps Modernes

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Basong Cuo for Zheng and Five Players, Op. 65

Colorful Sutra Banner for Piano Trio, Op. 58

December Chrysanthemum for Flute and Piano, Op. 52

Namucuo for Piano, Op. 53

Hibiscus for Six Players, Op. 48

San Die for Zheng and Flute, Op. 7a

LES TEMPS MODERNES: Fabrice Pierre, conductor

Total Playing Time: 55:13

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1. ***Basong Cuo*** for Zheng and Five Players, Op. 65 (11:06)
2. ***Colorful Sutra Banner*** for Piano Trio, Op. 58 (10:18)
3. ***December Chrysanthemum*** for Flute and Piano, Op. 52 (7:39)
4. ***Namucuo*** for Piano, Op. 53 (6:26)
5. ***Hibiscus*** for Six Players, Op. 48 (11:42)
6. ***San Die*** for Zheng and Flute, Op. 7a (8:02)

LES TEMPS MODERNES: Fabrice Pierre, conductor
Michel Lavignolle, flute (tracks 1, 3, 5, 6)
Jean-Louis Bergerard, clarinet (tracks 1, 5)
Claire Bernard, violin (tracks 1, 2, 5)
Florian Nauche, cello (tracks 1, 2, 4)
Emmanuelle Maggesi, piano (tracks 2, 3, 4, 5)
Anna Astesano, harp (track 1)
Benoit Poly, percussion (track 5)
with Su Chang, zheng (tracks 1, 6)

Total Playing Time: 55:13

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM:

B*asong Cuo* for Zheng and Five Players is a composition jointly commissioned by zheng player Su Chang and the Central Conservatory of Music. Written in 2012, this piece is one of my chamber music works inspired by the nine holy lakes in Tibet. The series includes *Namucuo*, *Lamura Cuo*, *Yangzhuoyong Cuo*, and *Mapangyong Cuo*.

Scored for zheng, harp and five other instruments, *Basong Cuo* portrays the gorgeous scenic environment of the lake named in the title. The music not only depicts the tranquil landscape, but also reflects the emotions a person might feel upon viewing the Holy Lake. This piece's style is somewhat different from those typical of my previous works, demonstrating the continuing evolution of my musical thinking and means of expression.

Colorful Sutra Banner was composed in 2006. It was commissioned by the Chinese violinist Lu Wei and cellist Zhao Jing. The music was inspired by memories of my journey to the Tibetan Plateau. Dating back to the earliest Buddhist legends, such multicolored sutra banners are also called prayer flags. They are found everywhere in Tibet, where they are considered among the most sacred symbols. The

music reflects both the beautiful Tibetan landscapes as well as the spiritual philosophy and beliefs of the Tibetan people.

December Chrysanthemum was commissioned by the Beijing Nicolet International Flute Competition Committee, and was composed in 2006 in memory of little Nini, my deceased daughter. The music represents the image of white chrysanthemums withered amid the first snows of winter, conveying feelings of heart-stopping beauty as well as of deeply painful and bitter emotions in the manner of traditional East Asian aesthetics. Even as the music evokes bleak vistas of a snow-covered wasteland, it also suggests traces of the undying forces of life, stimulating feelings of hope in people's hearts, even in the face of an often cold and uncaring world.

Composed in 2006, **Namucuo** was commissioned by Zou Xiang, a young Chinese pianist, for his Carnegie Hall debut in New York. Namucuo is a lake located on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau at an elevation of 4,700 meters. It is one of the three holiest lakes in the Tibetan tradition, and is surrounded on all sides by snow-capped mountains. While on the shores of this mysterious lake in 2001, I was moved deeply by the feelings of tranquility and eternity that it aroused, and sought to embody this soulful experience in music.

Hibiscus was composed specifically for the musicians of Present Ensemble in 2005. Hibiscus, sometimes called the China rose, has been one of the most meaningful flowering plants in the eyes of Chinese literati through the ages, symbolizing—among other things—the fleeting nature of fame or personal glory. Whether in full bloom or withered, they almost simultaneously represent people’s feelings of happiness and joy on one hand, but sadness and confusion on the other. In Chinese artistic traditions, both the delicate charm of a bud ready to burst into bloom and its inevitable withering constitute a strong symbol of transient beauty.

San Die—in its original version for shakuhachi and koto—was commissioned in 1986 by Kifu Mitsuhashi, a famous Japanese shakuhachi player, who premiered it in Tokyo. In 2007, a new version of the work for flute and zheng was first performed in Beijing by Fan Ran, a Chinese zheng player. In this duet version, my intention was to explore the timbral contrasts between a traditional Chinese instrument and a mainstream Western instrument: the zheng embodies the Eastern stylization of ease and comfort, while the flute evokes the inner heart’s sadness and tension.

— Notes by Xiaogang Ye

Xiaogang Ye has been widely acclaimed over three decades as one of China’s leading contemporary composers. Born on September 23, 1955, he studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in China from 1978 until 1983. Upon graduation he was appointed Resident Composer and Lecturer at the Central Conservatory of Music, and has since served the institution as vice chair of the composition department and vice president, among other positions. From 1987 until 1994 he studied at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Among his former teachers are Minxin Du, Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner, Louis Andriessen and Alexander Goehr.

As a member of the Chinese Parliament, Ye is entrusted with various cultural duties. He is presently Chairman of China Musicians’ Association, Vice Chairman of the International Music Council, as well as the Founder and Artistic Director of Beijing Modern Music Festival, the biggest contemporary music festival in the Far East. Ye is also the founder and artistic director of the Shenzhen Belt & Road International Music Festival, the Tsingtao International Music Festival and the International Music Competition Harbin, which includes separate piano, violin and vocal categories.

He has received numerous prizes and awards — among others the 1982 Al-



exander Tcherepnin prize, the 1986 Japan Dance Star Ballet prize, and awards from the Urban Council of Hong Kong (1987–94), the Taiwan Symphony Orchestra (1992), the China Cultural Promotion Society (1993), the Li Foundation, San Francisco (1994) and the China National Symphony Orchestra (1996). In 2013 Ye received the China Arts Award. He was a fellow of the Metropolitan Life Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts in 1996, and of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in 2012.

Ye's oeuvre comprises symphonic works, a wide range of chamber music, operas and film music; much of his music bears connections to Chinese culture and tradition. In ***The Song of the Earth*** for soprano and orchestra, premiered in January 2005, Ye

uses the original Chinese texts on which Mahler based his symphonic work, *Das Lied von der Erde*. The work has received performances in New York (Avery Fisher Hall), Munich (Philharmonie), Berlin (Konzerthaus), Venice, Rome and Lucerne. Ye also refers to old Chinese legends and texts in the ***Macau Bridge Suite*** (2001) and ***Four Poems of Lingnan*** (2011), which were recorded by the Macau Orchestra in 2014.

In August 2008, Ye's piano concerto ***Starry Sky*** was premiered during the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing by pianist Lang Lang. Accompanied by dance and light shows, the live broadcast was watched by three billion people worldwide. The composer's deep attachment to nature and the Buddhist religion is shown especially in compositions such as the "Tibet Series." In ***Twilight of the Himalayas*** (2013) he gives his impressions of traveling through Tibet and Nepal. Several of the chamber works featured in this recording also reflect the inspiration he derived from his Tibetan travels, as well as from his "Tropical Plants Series," in which each work is named after a tropical plant and characterizes Ye's southern Chinese homeland.

Major orchestras and ensembles worldwide have performed his music, includ-



ing (among many others) the New York Philharmonic, the Detroit Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the New Zealand Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Hamburg Philharmonic, the Bamberg Symphony, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Russian National Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and all of the major Chinese orchestras. His smaller-scale works have been performed by Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Utopik, Present Ensemble, Les Temps Modernes, the New European En-

semble and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Xiaogang Ye's discography includes recordings by distinguished ensembles on the EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, Wergo, Polo Arts, Naxos, BIS and Delos labels.

The French chamber music ensemble **Les Temps Modernes** was founded in Lyon in 1993 by clarinetist Jean-Louis Bergerard and flutist Michel Lavignolle. Its members have always shared the common goal of making twentieth-century and twenty-first-century repertoire better known, and they first made a name for themselves

with interpretations of major contemporary works by composers such as Messiaen, Berio, Crumb and Donatoni.

After their initial period, Les Temps Modernes decided to explore some of the new music that resulted from recent advances in technology. Their specific mission is thus best described as an effort to achieve balance between their work in existing contemporary styles and their exploration of new ones.

In 2002, the group released a DVD (Universal music) with music by Tristan Murail and the video created by Hervé Bailly-Ba-

sin that won the famous Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros.

Les Temps Modernes have made guest appearances at many festivals, notably Musica (Strasbourg), La Cité de la Musique (Paris), La Bâtie (Geneva), Suono Francese (Rome, Florence), La Saison de la France au Québec (Montreal), Classical Next (Vienna), NYYD Festival (Tallinn), Gaida Festival (Vilnius), The Musical Neighborhoods (Yokohama), Hanyang University Concerts (Seoul), China-ASEAN Music Festival (Nanning), New Music Week (Shanghai) and BMMF (Beijing).

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