



The Butterfly Lovers

Piano Concerto



Chen Jie, Piano
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Carolyn Kuan

The Yellow River

Piano Concerto



**Yin Chengzong / Sheng Lihong / Chu Wanghua / Liu Zhuang /
Shi Shucheng / Xu Feisheng**
The Yellow River Piano Concerto
(based on *Yellow River Cantata* by Xian Xinghai)

Throughout the long history of China, music has occupied an important position, in earlier times not least in its association with ceremonies of ultimate political significance. For the new rulers of China who came to power in 1949, music continued to have a significant rôle to play in society and in political education. This resulted in inevitable limitations and restrictions, while certain acceptable works enjoyed enormous popularity. One of these, *The Yellow River Concerto*, was based on the famous *Yellow River Cantata* by Xian Xinghai, a work dating from the period of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), and devised by the committee of composers and musicians then considered advisable for such a

task, Yin Chengzong, Sheng Lihong, Chu Wanghua, Liu Zhuang, Shi Shucheng and Xu Feisheng. The concerto, with solo piano arpeggios represent the waves of the river, leading to a strong and simple melody associated with the boatmen on the river, struggling against the forces of nature. The second movement depicts the grandeur of the scenery through which the river passes, while the third movement shows the river in anger, the challenge offered by the Yellow River a counterpart of the challenge offered by a foreign aggressor. The final movement opens with the patriotic melody *Defend the Yellow River*, leading to the triumph of the people, joining in victory.

Chen Gang / He Zhanhao
The Butterfly Lovers Piano Concerto
(arranged by Chen Gang from *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto*, edited by Chen Jie)

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto was written in 1958 by Chen Gang and He Zhanhao while they were students at the Shanghai Conservatory and was first performed in May the following year. Musically the concerto is a synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions, although the melodies and overall style are adapted from traditional Chinese Opera. The solo violin is used with a technique that recalls the playing technique of *erhu*, the Chinese two-string fiddle. It is a one-movement programmatic concerto, with three sections that correspond to the three phases of the story – *Falling in Love*, *Refusing to Marry* and *Metamorphosis*.

The narrative, derived from Chinese folk-lore, tells the story of the lovers Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. The two had been studying together, with Zhu Yingtai disguised as a boy, her identity unknown to her friend

Liang Shanbo. Their period of study together and friendship is a happy one, which comes to an end when Zhu Yingtai is compelled to return home, and the couple part at a pavilion, eighteen miles from the city. This forms the exposition of a tripartite sonata-form movement.

In the central section, the formal development, Zhu Yingtai now defies her father, who has arranged a marriage for her. Liang Shanbo decides to visit Zhu Yingtai and only now finds out that she is a girl and about to be married. There is a tender duet between the solo violin and cello, now that Liang Shanbo realises the nature of his affection for his former companion. Liang Shanbo dies, the victim of despair, and Zhu Yingtai, on the way to her wedding, stops at her lover's tomb and leaps into it. The tomb bursts open and at the sound of the gong the music reaches a climax.

In the final section of the concerto, the recapitulation, the love theme reappears and Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai emerge from the tomb as a pair of butterflies, flying together, never again to be parted.

In 1985, Chen Gang arranged the *Concerto* for piano and orchestra. It was given its first performance and recorded by the renowned Chinese pianist Hsu Feiping.

Chen Jie



One of the most dynamic Chinese pianists today, Chen Jie was accepted by The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia at the age of thirteen. Since her début with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Wolfgang Sawallisch, at the age of sixteen, she has performed in many leading concert venues around the world. A frequent soloist with major orchestras, Ms. Chen has collaborated with orchestras such as the Minnesota Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Israel Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Sinfonia Varsovia, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. She has won prizes at many international competitions including the Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition, the Santander Paloma O'Shea International Competition, the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (USA) and the Minnesota International Piano-e-Competition (USA). *The New York Times* wrote: "She has shown she is more than a virtuosic clone".

Although making her name by performing Western music, Ms. Chen has developed a keen interest in Chinese music. Her début album titled *Chinese Piano Favourites* (8.570602) was released to critical acclaim on the Naxos label. Since then, she has been actively involved in transcribing Chinese traditional music for the piano. www.chenjiemusic.com

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1946, is the country's leading professional orchestra. It has an establishment of ninety players and performs over a hundred concerts annually, touring within New Zealand and offering its main symphonic programmes in Auckland and Wellington. An acclaimed international tour in 2010 included appearances at Vienna's Musikverein, Lucerne's KKL, Geneva's Victoria Hall and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Earlier tours have featured concerts at the Beijing Olympic Cultural Festival, the BBC Proms, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Snape Maltings in England and the Aichi World Expo in Japan. Music Director Pietari Inkinen succeeded James Judd in January 2008. Other conductors who have worked with the NZSO during his tenure include, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Alexander Lazarev, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have worked with the orchestra include Pinchas Zukerman, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Yefim Bronfman, Simon O'Neill, Steven Isserlis, Freddy Kempf and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. Over one million of their discs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. www.nzso.co.nz



Photo: Olivia Taylor

Carolyn Kuan

Appointed the 10th Music Director of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra in 2011, Carolyn Kuan is recognized as one of the most exciting, innovative and outstanding conductors of her generation. Her North American engagements include the Baltimore, San Francisco, Detroit, Seattle, Milwaukee and North Carolina symphonies; the Florida and Louisville orchestras; the New York City Ballet; Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music; and the New York City Opera. International engagements include concerts with the Bournemouth Symphony, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de Yucatán, Residentie Orkest, and the Royal Danish Orchestra.

In addition to traditional repertoire, Carolyn Kuan is equally known for her unique expertise in Asian music and contemporary works. She has led world premières for Music from Japan and has conducted multimedia productions of *The Butterfly Lovers Concerto* and *A Monkey's Tale* as part of Detroit Symphony's World Music Series. Since 2007, she has directed the annual San Francisco Symphony Chinese New Year Concert. For the Seattle Symphony, Ms. Kuan helped launch the hugely successful Celebrate Asia! programme with community leaders representing eight Asian cultures, and led sold out performances for three consecutive years.

The recipient of numerous awards, she holds the distinction of being the first female to be awarded the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Fellowship. Winner of the first Taki Concordia Fellowship, she has received additional awards from the Women's Philharmonic, Conductors Guild and Susan W. Rose Fund for Music.

Carolyn Kuan



Photo: Charlie Schuck

Also available:



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Playing Time
49:00

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The Yellow River Concerto is one of the most popular of all Chinese works, a richly melodic exploration of scenic variety, and a forceful expression of patriotic pride. Written in 1958 by Chen Gang and He Zhanhao, *The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* has achieved world renown for its moving and beautiful synthesis of Western and Eastern traditions. In 1985 Chen Gang made an arrangement for piano and orchestra, played on this recording in the edition by the brilliant international soloist Chen Jie.

**YIN Chengzong / SHENG Lihong / CHU Wanghua /
LIU Zhuang / SHI Shucheng / XU Feisheng**

The Yellow River Piano Concerto 21:54

(based on *Yellow River Cantata* by Xian Xinghai)

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|------------|---|--------------|
| [1] | I. Prelude: The Song of the Yellow River Boatmen | 03:39 |
| [2] | II. Ode to the Yellow River | 04:11 |
| [3] | III. The Yellow River in Wrath | 07:06 |
| [4] | IV. Defend the Yellow River | 06:58 |

CHEN Gang / HE Zhanhao

[5] The Butterfly Lovers Piano Concerto 27:06

(arranged by Chen Gang from

The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto, edited by Chen Jie)

Chen Jie, Piano
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • Carolyn Kuan

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