The NTCH
The Voices of Taiwan
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Many excellent Taiwanese composers, such as Tsang-Houei Hsu, Ma, Shui-Long, Hwang-Long Pan, Deh-Ho Lai, Yen Lu, Tyzen Hsiao and Nan-Chang Chien, have been diligent in composing for decades and delivered numerous moving melodies, yet still unknown to many people in Taiwan.

As a prominent sanctuary for performing arts in Taiwan, the NTCH not only provides the best venue but shoulders unshirkable responsibility to accumulate and pass down cultural assets for the country. Musicians need a stage and so do composers. Without performances, wonderful musical works will not be presented to the world; without recordings, beautiful compositions will not be preserved for many generations to come. In light of this, the NTCH has launched a "The Voices of Taiwan" phased project which records Taiwan's musical pieces. The recordings of Taiwanese composers' brainchildren allow the people to know more about Taiwan's music and amass cultural assets for future reference.

The albums include Ma, Shui-Long's Bamboo Flute Concerto, Searching and Capriccio of Kuando, Hwang-Long Pan's Heterophony and Metempsychose, Deh-Ho Lai's The Dream of the Red Chamber Symphony and Dialect IV, Yen Lu's Piano Concerto No. 2, Memories of Jiangnan and Reciting with My Sword, and Tyzen Hsiao's piano concerto, cello concerto and violin concerto. All are performed by the NSO. In addition to continuing to invite senior composers to write large orchestral compositions, the project will also select young composers under the age of 40 to write chamber pieces, concertos and vocal music.
The NSO, a symphony orchestra representing our nation, has to speak their own voice and exhibit their own characteristics. And the recording and releasing of this series of albums have served the purposes of not only shaping the NSO's characters but also manifesting the essence of our native composers' works. Domestically, the NSO provides a stage for native composers to present their works, with an attempt to bring another composing craze; internationally, the NSO proudly brings the world the music representing Taiwan, proving that in addition to the remarkable achievements in excellently rendering Western musical works, Taiwan's orchestras also possess their own voices.

The NTCH calls upon more Taiwanese composers to support the effort by shaping and molding Taiwan's contemporary music, preserving the valuable assets as part of our collective memory.
The NTCH and the NSO's “The Voices of Taiwan” series has collected classical works of Taiwanese composers including Ma, Shui-Long, Hwang-Long Pan, De-Ho Lai, Yen Lu and Tyzen Hsiao. The CDs not only illustrate the development of Taiwan music but also pass down the masterpieces of contemporary musicians.

The latest additions to our series are Chih-Yuan Kuo (born in 1921) and Sung-Jen Hsu (born in 1941) whose amazing orchestral pieces are now preserved in our CDs. As great composers of the 20th century, they have gone through different paths in life and delivered their own interpretations of oriental culture and Taiwan's customs. On the basis of contemporary western music, they have presented to the world breath-taking compositions.

Deserving the name of the pioneer of Taiwan's modern ethnic music, Chih-Yuan Kuo has insisted on using western musical skills to create music for Taiwan while having been through the Japanese rule, the Second World War and the practice of Martial Law. He has drawn inspiration from Taiwan's local conditions and thus written a wide range of music including opera, orchestral pieces, chamber music, piano pieces, songs, nanguan/beiguan opera, drama music and Taiwan's folk songs. In his orchestral suite Reflection, Kuo transforms his childhood memories of the Che Gu Zhen performance into an energetic Folk Dance; the sounds of huqin spreading over night fields are the source of his Night Song; and Festival depicts a solemn and yet busy celebration.
Sung-Jen Hsu, having grown up in music, uses music as a mental language to express his thoughts toward different encounters. His piano concerto *Pounding Rain*, based on a Taiwanese folk song, carries a delicate, sophisticated, magnificent and flowing style of romance, teeming with a rich Taiwanese flavor. Ping-Pan tune is a Hakka mountain tune, most often used to accompany Hakka Music Theater. Its introduction and intermezzo are especially distinctive. Of Hakka origin, he re-invents a level beat with orchestral instrumentation and successfully delivers a new look for traditional Hakka tunes.

These two masters persevere in creating music with their different life experiences. They have turned their love of life into music and used their works to document various facets of Taiwan, becoming our valuable possessions. I look forward to the release of the brand new “The Voices of Taiwan” series, letting more people appreciate the richness of Taiwan's music and the beauty of our country through their creations.

Artistic Director
Chih-Yuan Kuo
composer

By Wen-Chi Ruan

Chih-Yuan Kuo was born in 1921 in Yuanli village, Miaoli County, Taiwan. Long before the island was liberated from Japanese colonial rule he studied composition theory in the Music Department of Japan University's College of Fine Arts. After the War of Liberation ended in 1945, he returned to Taiwan, but left again for Japan in 1967 to pursue studies in composition at National Tokyo Fine Arts University's College of Music. While in Tokyo he came under the influence of such Japanese masters as Ikeno Uchitomojiro, and Yasiro Akio.

Returning to Taiwan in 1969 Chih-Yuan Kuo served in the Hsinchu Normal School's and the Taiwan Provincial Education Department's orchestral research committees. He is currently retired.

Chih-Yuan Kuo has performed a wide selection of numbers both in Taiwan and overseas including the orchestral suites *Recollection* and *Taiwan Melody: Two Movements*, and the operetta for adolescents *Cow Herder and Weaver Maik*, and Piano concertino, and Piano Sonata. Other pieces include *Three Orchestral Etudes from Hupei Folk Songs*, and *Symphony in A--From Tangshan to Taiwan*, and his most beloved works *Red Rose*, and *Nocturnal Mooring at Maple Bridge*. 
Sung-Jen Hsu
composer

Born in 1941, began to compose early in his childhood. After mostly pianistic training under Mrs. D. M. MacLeod and Mme. Pao-Yi Kim, he studied theories and composition with Prof. Er-Hwa Hsiao during his study of philosophy at National Taiwan University (1962–1966).

With scholarship of DAAD he completed his courses in composition (Prof. H. Schroeder), Piano (K.Kaufhold) and conducting (W.von der Nahmer) at the Musikhochschule in Cologne (1968–1974). He worked at opera houses in Karlsruhe and Dortmund before he returned home in 1976, and became the conductor of the Taipei City orchestra.

He is now professor and conductor at the music department of the Taipei National University of the Arts since its founding in 1983.

His main works: piano solos, songs, sonata for violin and piano, concerto capriccioso for orchestra, piano concerto and piano trio Folksongs; and author of books on music aesthetics, instrumentation and performing practice.
Wen-Pin Chien
conductor

Appointed to the Music Director of Taiwan Philharmonic (NSO) in 2001, Wen-Pin Chien was the central artistic force behind the recent innovative seasons. Under his direction, the orchestra has successfully created the annual Subscription Concerts and celebrated it's 20th anniversary with Richard Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen, the four-operas cycle first-ever presented in the Chinese speaking areas. His other position includes Resident Conductor of the Deutsche Oper am Rhein since 1996/1997 season.

Born in Taipei in 1967, Chien began to study violin, piano and composition at an early age. In 1988 he graduated from the Taiwan Academy of Arts summa cum laude with major in piano, and moving on to complete his master's degree in conducting at the National University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, 1990-1994.

Chien won the first prize at the International La Bottega Conducting Competition in Treviso, Italy, 1992, the second prize in Douai, France, 1994, and was awarded the only Special Mention in the first Leonard Bernstein Jerusalem International Conducting Competition in Israel, 1995. He participated in the Pacific Music Festival (PMF) in Sapporo, Japan as an assistant to artistic directors Michael Tilson Thomas and Christoph Eschenbach. In the following year he conducted the PMF Orchestra on tour and made his debut with the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra in 1997. From 1998 to 2004, Chien was the Resident Conductor of the PMF Orchestra. As a guest conductor, Chien has worked with orchestras in Italy, Czech, Russia, France, Japan, Germany and Taiwan.

Chien also appeared as a guest conductor at the Hamburgische Staatsoper, Komische Oper Berlin, Opernhaus Graz, Theater Bonn and the Grand Théâtre de Genève. In 2012 he will make his debut with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London.
Darrell Ang is the winner of the Besancon, Toscanini and Pedrotti International Conducting Competitions and currently holds the position of Associate Conductor of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the Singapore National Youth Orchestra.

He lives in London and is a regular guest with some of the world's best orchestras (in Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Berlin, London, Milan, Taipei, etc.). He is also a composer of orchestral, chamber and vocal works and is active as an educator.
Vera Hui-Pin Hsu
piano

Vera Hui-Pin Hsu is a conductor/pianist and the winner of the 2009 International Conductors Workshop and Competition. She is currently a doctoral candidate in piano performance at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (under the tutelage of Martin Canin and Norman Carey), sponsored by three-year Taiwan Government Scholarship and the CUNY University Fellowship. She has given piano recitals and appeared in chamber music concerts throughout New York City, including Carnegie Hall (Weill Hall). In 2008, Ms. Hsu made her U.S. professional conducting debut with Macon Symphony Orchestra and served as assistant conductor in Chelsea Opera, New York City. In the 2011-2012 Season, Ms. Hsu will tour with Haifa Symphony Orchestra, performing as a piano soloist in three subscription concerts in Israel.
Founded in 1986 by the Ministry of Education, the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO), also known as Taiwan Philharmonic, became an artistic affiliate of the National Chiang Kai-Shek Cultural Center in 2005.

The orchestra has been benefited from the leadership of many music directors and principal conductors, including Gerard Akoka, Urs Schneider, Tsang-Houei Hsu, Da-Shen Chang, Jahja Ling, Wen-Pin Chien and Günther Herbig. Starting August 2010, Maestro Shao-Chia Lü has been Music Director of NSO and will lead the NSO continually to further enrich its performances and carry out its mission as the flagship of classical ensemble in Taiwan.

The NSO works regularly with internationally acclaimed musicians, including Lorin Maazel, K. Penderecki, Rudolf Barshai, Kek-Tjiang Lim, G. Schwarz, Uri Mayer, Joseph Silverstein, Leonard Slatkin, Christopher Hogwood, Christopher Poppen and many others. Tour performances were also regularly offered throughout Taiwan and in overseas, in places such as Vienna, Paris, Berlin, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Sapporo, Tokyo, Yokohama, Hong Kong and Guangzhou.
This suite is written to recall what I remember about my childhood. I found the original title *Folk Suite* inappropriate so I decided to change it to *Recollections*. There are four movements:

1. *Bacchanale*: *Bacchanale* is a drunken festivity derived from ancient Greece. During my junior high school years, I always listened to the 'Bacchanale' from Camille Saint-Saëns' opera on the records. I also noticed some oriental dance music from foreign period movies where the music carried rich eastern atmosphere. I use both the Gypsy scale and pentatonic scale to create this imaginary *Bacchanale* of mine.

2. *Night Song*: I lived in the countryside when I was little. I found it quite touching when I heard the Er-hu or Chinese bamboo flute at night. I often thought of the sounds and the landscape and this *Night Song* just appeared in my mind.

3. *Folk Dance*: The Che Gu Zhen show is nowhere to be seen today. However, during my childhood, I often saw a buffoon and a female clown performed this musical comedy in temple fairs. The *Folk Dance* was created based on my memory of the Che Gu Zhen show.

4. *Festival*: The 23rd day of the third month on the Chinese lunar calendar is the birthday of Mazu, the most worshipped deity by Taiwanese. The celebration of her birthday is among the largest religious activities in Taiwan. At the beginning of the movement, one can feel the serious spirits in the temple and then the music gets louder because the Mazu pilgrimage is approaching from afar. When the pilgrimage reaches the temple, gongs and drums are making loud music and the movement ends with joyous festivity tone.
There are two parts in the composition: *Folk Song* and *Tea-Picking Dance*. The *Folk Song* is marked *Larghetto*. The *Folk Song* comes in the following order:

*Prelude — Theme (Taiwanese folk song: Song of Farmers) — Intermezzo I — Variation I of the theme — Intermezzo II — agitated Intermezzo III — Variation II of the theme — Intermezzo IV — Postlude*. The *Postlude* is a cello solo, which is then followed by the *Tea-Picking Dance*.

The *Tea-Picking Dance* is a combination of singing and acting as well as a duet of a pretty actress and a buffoon. The theme is based on the *Tea-Picking Song*. The Allegretto starts to develop to its fullest and the music moves toward the second theme where passionate melodies work with wild rhythms. Then the theme expands into the melodies of the second theme and a lively postlude concludes the piece. The composition was written for a chamber ensemble in 1975 and rearranged for string orchestra in 1995.
This composition is based on folk drama in Taiwan. There are three movements:

1. Sword Dance: Late Night is a famous tune for sword dancing in Beijing Opera. For example, the Beautiful Lady Yu and Concubine Yang both danced to this tune when playing with the sword. Beijing Opera was brought to Taiwan long ago and has become part of Taiwanese folk drama, which is also known as Peking Opera or Standard Pronunciation Opera.

2. Nanguan: The movement uses Jiang-shui and Gan-lu tunes from Jiao-jia play. Nanguan is a singing play while Jiao-jia play is a military play against Nanguan. Here the Jiang-shui tune employs polytonality for modern expression.

3. Nao-ting: Nao-ting of Beiguan is a must-play for celebrations in Taiwan. The movement begins with morning serenity and the tune of Nao-ting does not start until a folk-style melody appears. Then a series of variations gradually warm up the feelings, and finally the music concludes with a climax.
Sung-Jen Hsu:
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra,
“Pounding Rain” —Variations on a theme

This concerto was composed in 1985 and was given its premiere on December 22 of the same year, with the composer at the piano and Loong-Hsing Wen conducting.

The unison of piano solo introduces the first subject to the first movement. After alternating with the orchestra, the piano takes up the beginning of the second subject, calm and simple with its line lingering on distant intervals, a full appassionato concludes the subject. The movement as a whole is full of fresh ideas—the rendering of subjects and episodes, the way they are developed and recurring—and it is in its form transparent and balanced.

The second movement is in its character like a manifestation of thinking of the lost past. The initial theme is brought forth by the solo clarinet. After briefly developing to a climax, the serene middle section builds up on empty perfect fourths and fifths, with its delicate continuation of variations. The main theme returns hesitantly in 6/8.

The third movement is constructed on a Taiwanese folksong “Pounding Rain” with its seventeen variations. The dialogue between the raindrops motif for piano solo and french horn serves as a short introduction. The oboe plays the theme, and the strings join in. The first variation is a simplification of the theme, reducing it to the strings pizzicati and quarter notes of the first horn, and from this frame seven variations follow. As the continuation of “Sostenuto Maestoso” the eight bar passacaglia takes shape which is repeated, in different formations, six times before the raindrops motive recurs in its original form. The coda begins with the Andante of the woodwinds, and the full orchestra brings the piece to a powerful ending.
“Ping-Pan tune” is the popularized form of ancient Hakka “Mountain-Song”, in contrast to its plain singing, “Ping-Pan tune” is always accompanied by instrumental ensemble, which also provides very characteristical pre-and interludes to the singing.

The two themes of this Rondo are taken from the very special instrumental music. The cheerful first theme is composed of two overlapping pentatonic scales; the second theme is marked with strong rhythm, tonally very interesting, but convincing, in its modulation to lower major second right after the opening measure. The rhythmical motiv is repeated with pizzicati of the strings and makes a playful contrast.

The middle section is a canon-like display of a dolce-motiv derived from the first theme. After a brief repris the coda with stretta section leads to a joyful ending of exaltation.
Wen-Pin Chien, conductor 1-11
Darrell Ang, conductor 12
Vera Hui-Pin Hsu, piano 9-11
National Symphony Orchestra

Chih-Yuan Kuo: Orchestra Suite, Recollections

1 1st Mov.: Bacchanale 04’17
2 2nd Mov.: Night Song 04’30
3 3rd Mov.: Folk Dance: 04’07
4 4th Mov.: Festival 03’59
5 Chih-Yuan Kuo: Folk Song and Tea-Picking Dance 06’17

Chih-Yuan Kuo: Three Taiwanese Folk Pieces for Orchestra

6 1st Mov.: Sword Dance 02’55
7 2nd Mov.: Nanguan 03’07
8 3rd Mov.: Nao-ting 03’41

Sung-Jen Hsu: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, “Pounding Rain” —Variations on a theme

9 1st Mov. 07’46
10 2nd Mov. 05’34
11 3rd Mov. 05’59
12 Sung-Jen Hsu: Rondo on Hakka folksong “Ping-Pan tune” 05’19

TOTAL 57’36