

A close-up portrait of David Fung, a young man with dark, spiky hair, wearing a black tuxedo jacket, a white dress shirt, and a light-colored bow tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

David Fung

Evening Conversations

Chopin
Tan Dun
Rachmaninov
Schumann
Scarlatti



ELLIOT MIDWOOD
executive producer

 YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIEH, PRODUCER

David Fung

Evening Conversations

1	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Fantasie in C Minor, KV 475	12:15
2	Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in C# Minor, Opus posth.	4:07
3-10	Tan Dun, <i>Eight Memories in Watercolor</i> , Opus 1	14:46
	<i>Missing Moon</i>	2:06
	<i>Staccato Beans</i>	1:19
	<i>Herdboy's Song</i>	1:40
	<i>Blue Nun</i>	1:13
	<i>Red Wilderness</i>	2:10
	<i>Ancient Burial</i>	2:49
	<i>Floating Clouds</i>	2:00
	<i>SunRain</i>	1:27
11-15	Sergei Rachmaninov, Preludes 8-12, Opus 32	15:10
	<i>Vivo</i>	1:48
	<i>Allegro Moderato</i>	2:45
	<i>Lento</i>	5:35
	<i>Allegretto</i>	2:32
	<i>Allegro</i>	2:28
16	Robert Schumann, Arabesque, Opus 18	6:43

David Fung

Evening Conversations

17-29	Robert Schumann, <i>Kinderszenen</i> , Opus 15	19:49
	<i>Von fremden Ländern und Menschen</i> (From Foreign Lands and People)	1:46
	<i>Kuriose Geschichte</i> (Curious Story)	1:03
	<i>Hasche-Mann</i> (Blind Man's Bluff)	0:32
	<i>Bittendes Kind</i> (Pleading Child)	1:12
	<i>Glückes genug</i> (Happiness)	1:05
	<i>Wichtige Begebenheit</i> (Important Event)	0:52
	<i>Traümerei</i> (Dreaming)	2:50
	<i>Am Kamin</i> (At the Fireside)	1:03
	<i>Ritter vom Steckenpferd</i> (Knight of the Rocking Horse)	0:39
	<i>Fast zu ernst</i> (Almost too Serious)	2:07
	<i>Fürchtenmachen</i> (Frightening)	1:54
	<i>Kind im Einschlummern</i> (Child Falling Asleep)	2:18
	<i>Der Dichter spricht</i> (The Poet Speaks)	2:22
30	Frédéric Chopin, Nocturne in C Minor, Opus posth.	3:15
31	Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata KP34/L7 (Minuet)	1:37
32	Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata KP141/L422 (Toccata)	1:55
33	Domenico Scarlatti, Sonata KP32/L423 (Aria)	3:00

Audiophile music critic and writer **Rush Paul** called me and told me what a great idea it would be to re-release some of Yarlung's earlier albums in high res. Yarlung's 20th Anniversary gives us the perfect excuse to look back a bit and celebrate some of our earlier successes with outstanding musicians. **Elliot Midwood**, frequent executive producer and one of the principal equipment designers at Yarlung, offered to underwrite some of these releases. We begin with David Fung's now iconic *Evening Conversations*, an album for solo piano recorded in Zipper Hall at Colburn School, which helped put Yarlung on the international audiophile map. Prior Yarlung board member **Larry Davanzo** served as our valiant executive producer for the compact disc, which continues to be a best seller, even in this era of dwindling interest in digital physical media. This booklet includes our earliest liner notes and photographs, as well as Rush Paul's upcoming review, here reproduced in draft form. You can read his final article at David Robinson's online magazine *Positive Feedback*. Rush's words are included here with gratitude, and express permission from the writer (whose mischievous recommendation kicked off what I think of as the "Rush Paul Anniversary Series") and Dr. Robinson, publisher of Positive Feedback. David has been generous to Yarlung for many years.

A Rare Musical Experience with Pianist David Fung

I found myself talking recently on the phone with my friend Bob Attiyeh, the creative founder and visionary of Yarlung Records. I'm always intrigued by these occasional calls with Bob. One never knows whence they may wander. That day, Bob was filled with excitement. "Do you recall our conversation a year ago about reissuing some of Yarlung's early recordings in high resolution digital? You encouraged me to do it, and we're now about to release the original recording with David Fung that put Yarlung Records on the map. Would you like to hear an advance copy? More importantly, would you be willing to write something about it?"

Well, yes—I do recall, I said immediately. Bob was concerned there would be no market for a full album release when they'd included portions in various samplers over the years. He didn't want to abuse music listeners who have supported Yarlung. "Balderdash!" said I. "You need to do this. I'm sure more folks than I have left behind our vinyl collections and are now digital dependent. I can think of nothing finer than re-releases in Pure DSD256 and other high res digital formats from your 15ips analog master tapes and prior high resolution releases."

And, by golly, Bob has done it. His first offering is a GLORIOUS Pure DSD256 transfer from the original 15ips analog master tape of an album I treasured when it came out on CD. This is the translucent, transcendent, utterly magnificent recording of David Fung's solo piano recital recorded by Bob and the Yarlung team in 2006.

This new DSD256 transfer is a magical listening experience. If you've only heard the CD release, you have not *heard* these performances. These are the master tapes heard in as pure a sound as we can ever expect—no post processing, no compression, no messing about with frequency balance. As Dr. David Robinson (founder of Positive Feedback) and I have said before, the sound of a Pure DSD256 transfer (made with good equipment as used here) is indistinguishable to our ears from the analog tape source. DSD256 sound quality is simply that good.

David Fung is extraordinary—his playing soars on wings of the greatest delicacy, nuance, insight, and emotion. He combines a refined elegance with intensely poetic and expressive nuance. The clarity with which he navigates passages is breathtakingly liberating. Listening after all these years, I am once again awestruck by the musicianship, the intelligence, the technical excellence of these performances.

And the musical selections! They are just marvelous. This is a bold recital of demanding and diverse works. There is nothing trite or over-performed here. No pabulum. Even when he includes well known repertoire, David Fung's approach is fresh, insightful, deliciously innovative. And superbly well played. Did I say this before? Well, I'll say it again. The playing here transports me. It delights me, it keeps me engaged, wanting more, and coming back to listen again.

At the time of the original release of this album, it was highly praised by both the music critic press and by the audiophile press. James Harrington writing in *The American Record Guide* said, "I shall return to this recording many, many times and will watch for future releases from this talented artist." Gary Lemco writing for *Audiophile Audition* said, "For me, the recital's variety and breadth of palette rivals the kind of pianistic spectrum the late Shura Cherkassky would champion... Pearly eroticism infiltrates Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp Minor... Anyone familiar with the film classic *The Pianist* will embrace this performance as authentic. Fung has an immediate grasp of the large gestures in Rachmaninoff as well as his tender rhetoric."

David was just 23 when he recorded these performances—what a prodigy. As clear an example of youth knowing no fear as any I’ve known among musicians.

This is one of three albums David recorded with Yarlung. An earlier album, *The Piano*, focused on Liszt and Ravel, with an excellent concluding performance of Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue in B-flat minor, BWV 891*. And a following duo album, *Dialoghi*, with the inimitable Ms. Elinor Frey on cello, for which we have only half of the album re-issued. I implore Bob to re-release *Dialoghi* in its entirety. The Lefkowitz, Lutoslawski, Mayuzumi, and Saariaho works are keenly missed around here.

I’m guessing there are other analog tape marvels still in the Yarlung vaults awaiting similar DSD256 releases. I hope Bob will find a way to continue with these.

Graduating from school in Australia, David Fung moved to America in 2003 to study at the Colburn School in Los Angeles. It was at Colburn School, in Zipper Hall where this album was recorded, that Bob first heard David perform in concert. David recorded these performances during his final year at Colburn, before earning his Master’s and Doctorate degrees at Yale. Today he regularly performs as a soloist with many of the great ensembles, including the Cleveland Orchestra, the Detroit Symphony, the Israel Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, Orpheus, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

David lives in Vancouver and New York City, where he serves on the faculties of the Manhattan School of Music and the University of British Columbia. In Canada, he also serves as a curator at the Chan Center for the Performing Arts in Vancouver. He is a Steinway Artist and has released two albums with the Steinway and Sons label.

This new release earns my highest and most enthusiastic recommendation. If you have any affinity for classical piano, this recording should be at the top of your “to purchase next” list of recordings. Many thanks to Bob Attiyeh for giving us this excellent release to enjoy.

—Rushton Paul, writing for Positive Feedback

David Fung first released *Evening Conversations* in 2006. This recording was hailed as the “Best Piano recording I have ever heard” by John Casler. And in the year-end *American Record Guide* review of new piano recordings, James Harrington says of David Fung’s playing:

“My reviewing process has produced an overall favorite, and that is David Fung. Consistently good from start to finish, his playing impressed me for its phrasing and musicality.... It is clear that Fung’s heart and soul belong in the romantic era. The variety of his touch and articulation is well displayed in this music.... I shall return to this recording many many times and will watch for future releases from this talented artist.”

After hearing *Evening Conversations*, Jeffrey Kahane invited David to play the Ravel piano concerto and make his Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra debut as part of the orchestra’s prestigious Fortieth Anniversary season. A review by Alicia Kibbey in the following morning’s *Los Angeles Times* reads:

“David Fung is exceptionally good. After having heard Martha Argerich perform the Ravel Concerto with the [Los Angeles Philharmonic] last month, I was sure Fung would appear lackluster [in comparison] to our beloved Martha. Instead, his performance outshone hers in rhythmic excitement, orchestral ensemble... and in the nuancing of the solo passages throughout. I must add, however, that Martha had the same youthful exuberance as the 25 year-old [David Fung.] There are few young pianists that have the unassuming charisma, charm and natural talent of Fung, and he will certainly be welcomed back by his audience in Los Angeles.”

I heard David’s performance with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and he was every bit as magical as reported in the *Los Angeles Times*. Performances with orchestras in the United States, Europe, the Near East, Asia, and Australia followed David’s legendary concerts in Los Angeles, including a cycle of Mozart concertos with the Israel Camerata Orchestra. And while David triumphs in solo recitals and concerto performances in major concert halls the world over, he enjoys playing chamber music with friends just as much. Especially memorable to him are David’s many chamber music performances at Music@Menlo which he gave at the invitation of Wu Han and David Finckel, as well as at Galleria Nazionale della Puglia in Italy.

—Bob Attiyeh, producer



Christopher Hailey: Thoughts on the Music

The eighteenth-century antecedents of the modern concert grand – the harpsichord, clavichord, and fortepiano – were instruments well suited to the intimacy of the chamber, to small gatherings and candle-lit interchange. It was an age of conversation. And music, modeled on this principal pastime, was a medium for wit, sentiment, and rhetorical flourish. Mozart's fantasy and Scarlatti's sonatas, which bracket this recital by David Fung, remind us why the keyboard was considered such an ideal vehicle for a composer's flights of fancy. Here, alone, the thinking musician could freely engage the listener's ear with the allure of the musical idea.

These four works, all in a minor key, are a reminder that ruminative introspection was every bit as characteristic of this "enlightened age" as sparkling repartee. Scarlatti's over five hundred sonatas, written around mid-century for the Spanish court, are pioneering works for the harpsichord. Their succinct form, sharply etched individuality, and technical brilliance proved influential upon several generations of keyboard composers. Among Mozart's solo keyboard works, the C Minor Fantasy (1785), no doubt conceived for the fortepiano, holds a special place in the composer's output for its dramatic turbulence and harmonic daring, qualities that anticipate a Romantic age that Mozart, dead at 35 in 1791, would not live to see.

In the nineteenth century, as candle light gave way to gas, the piano, whose frame was now reinforced with iron, virtually replaced all earlier keyboard incarnations. Something of the eighteenth-century drawing room survived in the salon, where a fading aristocracy mingled with an ascendant bourgeoisie. This was the world of Frederic Chopin, the Polish composer and pianist who was fêted by Europe's social elite. But while his nocturnes contain echoes of the pensive side of Scarlatti and Mozart, these works are thoroughly Romantic in their inspiration. Here, conversation has turned to conjuring, the artist has become a magician, invoking through his singing tone the languid charm of the operatic cantabile.

Thanks to the manufacturing and marketing innovations of this burgeoning industrial age, the piano had become a ubiquitous fixture in middle-class homes, the pride of the parlor where family and friends gathered in the comforting warmth of the tiled stove. This is the cozy world of Robert Schumann, who, like Chopin, was also a conjurer, but his

subject matter was the lyric self, that special preserve of bürgerlich fantasy. In Schumann's hands the piano became an instrument of poetic utterance that could encapsulate a whim, a mood, or an arabesque in the few deft strokes of a character piece. The thirteen miniatures of *Scenes from Childhood* (1838) are masterpieces of this genre. In their simplicity these two- and three-part structures recall the straightforward directness of Scarlatti's sonatas, which in all but name, were character pieces of an earlier time. And like Mozart's fantasies, Schumann's works have the spontaneity of the sketch and the improvisation. But these childhood memories are more ingratiating than their eighteenth-century predecessors, less the stuff of discourse than of story-telling.

By the end of the nineteenth century the warm glow of the gas flame was giving way to the cold glare of electric light. The piano had reached the peak of its development as the powerful concert grand, an instrument capable of haranguing the multitudes with resources that were orchestral in scope, the instrument of thundering giants like Sergei Rachmaninov. But this taciturn Russian also knew how to reign in the piano's power and explore more contemplative terrain. Though his solo works ranged from études and variations to sonatas, Rachmaninov is perhaps best remembered for his preludes, works that have the kind of improvisatory air that suggests a late night post-concert performance for friends. Of the thirteen preludes of Opus 32 (1910) five are recorded here, ranging in mood from the mercurial (No. 8) to the passionate (No. 9) and the reflective (No. 10). There is a hint of Chopin in the fluttering texture and long-breathed melody of No. 12 in G# Minor, and No. 11 in B Major, delightful in its rhythmic and harmonic instability, seems at times like a wistful look back at the lost world of Schumann.

Something of Schumann lives on in Tan Dun's *Eight Memories in Watercolor* of 1978. These, too, are character pieces with fanciful titles that are evocative of childhood. The composer captured these memories as a homesick conservatory student in Beijing, employing both folk songs from his native Hunan (in numbers 2, 3, 4 and 8) as well as original material (in numbers 1, 5, 6 and 7) that reflected influences from the West. And like Schumann and Scarlatti, Chopin, Mozart, and Rachmaninov before him, Tan Dun was learning to master the secret of the miniature – a compositional form he has likened both to zen calligraphy and to the watercolor: “capturing essences with the minimum of gesture.” This is a fitting epigraph for this collection of short pieces, jewels of the composer's craft and worthy tests of a performer's taste and skill.

—Christopher Hailey

Original Producer's Notes, July 2006

It is with great pleasure that Yarlung Records presents David Fung's second album, *Evening Conversations*, which we recorded on March 27th, 28th and 29th, 2006, in Zipper Hall in Los Angeles. For David's first album, *A Journey from Hubris to Humility*, we used the legendary C-24 stereo microphone, and made full use of the warm ambience of the hall and the natural decay in this wonderful acoustic space. For *Evening Conversations*, however, we chose two Neumann U-47 tube microphones, and used a more intimate perspective for the microphone setup. In contrast to the mid-hall perspective we wanted for David's first album, this is more intimate music, and we wanted the sound to complement this more introspective repertoire. As before, we recorded directly to two tracks through our specially-modified tube microphone preamplifiers and custom cables. We recorded analog tape, as well as high definition 24-bit PCM digital media at 176,400 samples per second. I hope you enjoy these performances and the sound.

One of Yarlung Records' missions is to record and support young international-caliber artists at this stage in their concert careers. Happily, this mission is working. I understand that Sir Brian McMaster heard David's first album, and based on that representation of David's talent, hired him for his debut this summer in Queen's Hall at the venerated Edinburgh International Festival. Thank you Brian, and thank you David for giving us so much to celebrate.

At the time of this pressing, David is on concert tour in Spain, France, The Netherlands and Ireland. It is a pleasure to work with an artist like David, whose musical interpretations are rich and fresh without being eccentric, and always completely sincere.

I wish to dedicate this album to my friend and mentor Gustavo Hidalgo, who was born in Montevideo in 1952, and died in Santa Monica in 2006. In addition to being a great friend, Gustavo was ceaseless in his quest for great music captured with ever-more-perfect recording techniques. His support of my recordings, as well as his unwillingness to accept compromise, served as one of my great challenges and inspirations as an engineer and producer. Thank you Gustavo.

—Bob Attiyeh



David Fung

Evening Conversations

- 1 Mozart Fantasie in C Minor KV 475
- 2 Chopin Nocturne in C# Minor Opus posth.
- 3-10 Tan Dun *Eight Memories in Water Color* Opus 1
- 11-15 Rachmaninov Preludes Opus 32 numbers 8-12
- 16 Schumann Arabesque Opus 18
- 17-29 Schumann *Kinderszenen* Opus 15
- 30 Chopin Nocturne in C Minor, Opus posth.
- 31 D. Scarlatti Sonata KP34, L7 (Minuet)
- 32 D. Scarlatti Sonata KP141, L422 (Toccata)
- 33 D. Scarlatti Sonata KP32, L423 (Aria)

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