

NAXOS

CHEN YI

Works for Violin, Viola and Piano

Spring in Dresden

The Soulful and the Perpetual

Three Bagatelles from China West

Chinese Folk Dance Suite

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古風



Patrick Yim, Violin, Viola
Kiu Tung Poon, Piano



CHEN YI

(b. 1953)

Works for Violin, Viola and Piano

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| ❶ | Spring in Dresden 德雷斯頓之春 (2005) (version for violin and piano, 2024) | 19:53 |
| | The Soulful and the Perpetual 抒情曲與無窮動 (2012)
(version for viola and piano, 2024) | 9:01 |
| ❷ | I. The Soulful 抒情曲 | 2:17 |
| ❸ | II. The Perpetual 無窮動 | 6:44 |
| | Three Bagatelles from China West 西南小曲三首 (2006)
(version for violin and piano, 2024) | 8:21 |
| ❹ | I. Shan Ge 山歌調 | 3:43 |
| ❺ | II. Nai Guo Hou 乃過侯 | 3:13 |
| ❻ | III. Dou Duo 兜朵 | 1:25 |
| | Chinese Folk Dance Suite 中國民族舞組曲 (2000)
(arr. Wong Tak Chiu for saxophone and piano, 2017;
ed. Chen Yi for violin and piano, 2018) | 16:52 |
| ❼ | I. Lion Dance 獅舞 | 3:47 |
| ❽ | II. YangKo 秧歌 | 4:49 |
| ❾ | III. Muqam 木卡姆 | 8:16 |

Cover: *Red Silk-cotton Flower* by Ju Lian (1828–1904). Qing, ink and color on paper, album leaf, 35 x 50cm.
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Mr. Huo Pao-tsai, Mr. Lai Tak and others. Acc. no. 1973.0194.

Performers' Perspective

We are delighted to present the first recordings of four remarkable works by Chen Yi spanning a decade of her compositional output from 2000 to 2012. We extend our deepest gratitude to Chen Yi for adapting *The Soulful and the Perpetual* and *Three Bagatelles from China West* specifically for us to perform and record, and are honoured to include her arrangements of the two violin concertos, *Spring in Dresden* and *Chinese Folk Dance Suite*, in this portrait album. Chen Yi's intimate understanding of the violin allows her to reveal the instrument's full potential, and we are continually drawn to the vivid, inventive and visceral character of her music – from the rhythmically charged, fiery energy of *Muqam* to the delicate grace of *YangKo*. In these works, Chen imaginatively integrates Chinese folk music, dance, philosophy, and poetry with Western classical instruments to create an altogether new and unique artistic medium.

Patrick Yim and Kiu Tung Poon

Chen Yi (b. 1953)

Works for Violin, Viola and Piano

Chen Yi (陳怡), born 4 April 1953 in Guangzhou, China, is a highly acclaimed Chinese-American composer and violinist whose music bridges Eastern and Western traditions. Her works span orchestral, chamber, choral, solo and mixed ensemble repertoire, and are performed and recorded worldwide. She studied composition with Prof. Wu Zuqiang at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she earned her bachelor's degree and became the first woman to obtain a master's degree in composition from the institution. She continued her musical journey in the United States beginning in the mid-1980s, receiving her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Columbia University in the City of New York where she studied with Profs. Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky.

A prolific creator with an expansive output, Chen's music reflects deep roots in Chinese musical idioms alongside Western contemporary practice. She has held the Lorena Searcy Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor of Composition position at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory since 1998, and previously taught at the Peabody Conservatory.

Her honours include the Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2001), Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) fellowships, as well as numerous prizes and commissions. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005 and the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2019, and in 2024 was made an honorary member of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).

Chen was also a finalist for the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for Music for her orchestral work *Si Ji (Four Seasons)*. Her music is published by the Theodore Presser Company, and she is widely respected both as a composer and a mentor to younger generations of composers globally.

Her works have been performed by iconic soloists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Yo-Yo Ma and Evelyn Glennie, as well as by leading orchestras, including The Cleveland Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Staatskapelle Dresden.

The Soulful and the Perpetual 抒情曲與無窮動

Commissioned by Jessica Heller Knopf for the 2012 World Saxophone Congress in Scotland, my duet *The Soulful and the Perpetual* for alto saxophone and piano consists of two movements: the first is lyrical, with moving and gripping melodies; the second is perpetual motion, symbolising consistency and perseverance. The virtuosic cadenza is played using circular breathing in ever-moving patterns of rapid notes. The music moves forward exquisitely and fluently with agility. The work was adapted for viola and piano for Patrick Yim and Kiu Tung Poon in 2024.

Chinese Folk Dance Suite 中國民族舞組曲

Supported by a major commissioning award from the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, my work for violin solo and orchestra was premiered by The Women's Philharmonic with violinist Terrie Baune, conducted by Apo Hsu, in 2001.

I. Lion Dance 獅舞

People dance with elaborately decorated handmade lions, accompanied by percussion instruments, to celebrate joyous occasions and major festivals across China. In my composition, I use a Chinese drum and other percussion instruments to form a dynamic rhythmic background for the solo violin, which imitates tunes played on a *suona*, a traditional Chinese trumpet.

II. Yangko 秧歌

Originating in northern China, this folk dance has become one of China's most popular large-scale performance traditions. During the performance, people play rhythmic patterns on drums strapped to their waists while singing and dancing. In my second movement, I imagined a warm scene of *Yangko* dancing in the distance. The solo violin plays a sweet and graceful melody, while the orchestra layers non-pitched syllables to imitate percussion, creating a continuous, ever-flowing pulse.

III. Muqam 木卡姆

The *muqam* is a large-scale traditional music and dance form of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, originating in the 15th century. In my third movement, I keep its 7/8 metre and melodic style. The fiery dancing gesture builds toward a sustained climax, following a colourful violin cadenza that integrates improvisatory singing style with polyphonic writing.

Three Bagatelles from China West 西南小曲三首

Commissioned by Meet the Composer for flautist Marya Martin's *Flute Book for the 21st Century* project (later known as *Eight Visions – A New Anthology for Flute and Piano*, published by Theodore Presser and released on Naxos 8.559629), the work is dedicated to Gilbert Kaplan, a long-time friend of mine, for his tremendous support of classical music, with deep admiration and respect.

The authentic folk music of China's West inspired me to write this piece:

I. Shan Ge 山歌調 draws on folk elements from the solo piece *Shange Diao* ('Mountain Song'), played on the *lerong* wind instrument, and incorporates the musical patterns from the *kouxian*, a small wind instrument of the Jingpo people.

II. Nai Guo Hou 乃過侯 is inspired by the solo piece *Nai Guo Hou*, played on the *bawu* wind instrument, and incorporates pitch material from the Yi people's folk song *Ashima*.

III. Dou Duo 兜朵 comes from the folk song *Dou Duo* and the sound of the Miao people's *lusheng* ensemble.

Spring in Dresden 德雷斯頓之春

Commissioned by the Friends of Dresden Music Foundation for violinist Mira Wang, the New York Philharmonic, and the Staatskapelle Dresden, this piece marks an American commemoration of the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche Dresden, 60 years after its destruction during the Second World War in 1945. The world premiere was given at the Semperoper in Dresden, Germany, in 2005, conducted by Iván Fischer.

Full of excitement and inner power, the musical image is vivid, energetic, sometimes lyrical, and sometimes dramatic. The major theme, an angular three-note motif, consists of big leaps of wide intervals. Framed by cadenza excerpts at the centre and both ends, the virtuosic violin line is accompanied by the ever moving and growing textures in the background. Rests between long and short phrases symbolise the spaciousness of Chinese paintings, while the Beijing Opera reciting tune and *erhu*-inspired sliding tones enrich the writing and performing on Western instruments. The concerto's musical image came from an ancient Chinese poem of the same title by Du Fu (712–770) from the Tang Dynasty:

Happy Rain on a Spring Night 春夜喜雨

*Happy rain comes in time,
When spring is in its prime.
With night breeze it will fall,
And quietly moisten all.
Clouds darken wild roads,
Light brightens a little boat.
Saturated at dawn,
With flowers blooming the town.*

Patrick Yim



Honolulu-born violinist Patrick Yim made his solo debut with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra (now the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra), and has since given chamber music performances with members of the Juilliard, Emerson, St. Lawrence, Pacifica and Ying quartets. He appeared with The Cleveland Orchestra on a tour of the United States and Europe, and with the violinists of the Emerson Quartet at Carnegie Hall. In 2024, he performed the world premiere of *Bamboo Grove*, an unaccompanied violin work by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Zhou Long. Yim's discography, which features numerous works by Chen Yi, includes *Gobi Canticle* (Orchid Classics, 2026), *Onslow – String Quintets, Vol. 5* (Naxos 8.574709, 2026), *One* (New Focus Recordings, 2024), *New Waves* (Albany Records, 2023), *Digital Mist* (Naxos 8.559903, 2022), and *Memory* (Navona, 2020). Yim graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music (Bachelor and Master of Music) and Stony Brook University (Doctor of Musical Arts). He is an assistant professor of violin (Department of Music) and faculty fellow (Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, Nanovic Institute for European Studies) at the University of Notre Dame.

www.patrickyimviolin.com

Kiu Tung Poon



Photo: Ivan Tang

Young Steinway Artist Kiu Tung Poon has appeared on concert stages worldwide, and at venues and festivals including Tanglewood and Aspen in the United States, Wiener Konzerthaus in Austria, St Martin-in-the-Fields in London and the Great Wall of China in Beijing. Recent releases include the critically acclaimed *Digital Mist* (Naxos 8.559903), featuring works for violin and piano by George Tsontakis, Chen Yi and Sebastian and Nathan Currier, and *One Piano, Two Cultures – Early Piano Works by Contemporary Chinese Composers* (Grand Piano GP984). Kiu Tung Poon graduated from Indiana University Bloomington and the University of Texas at Austin with a Doctor of Musical Arts in piano performance. She is currently a senior lecturer in the Department of Music at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

www.kiutung.com

The four works on this album by the esteemed Chinese-American composer Chen Yi are all premiere recordings, two of which – *The Soulful and the Perpetual* and *Three Bagatelles* – she has adapted specifically for violinist/violist Patrick Yim and pianist Kiu Tung Poon for this recording. Admired for bridging Eastern and Western traditions, Chen Yi draws on authentic folk music from the west of China evoking the sound of the *bawu* and *lerong* in *Three Bagatelles*. Originally composed for saxophone and piano *The Soulful and the Perpetual* is characterised by two opposing movements – the first lyrical; the second a *perpetuum mobile*. *Spring in Dresden* is a vivid and energetic work with *erhu*-inspired sliding tones, while the *Chinese Folk Dance Suite* is colourful, virtuosic and brilliantly conceived.

CHEN YI 陳怡

(b. 1953)

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| 7-9 | Chinese Folk Dance Suite 中國民族舞組曲 (2000)
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WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS OF ARRANGEMENTS

Patrick Yim 嚴天成, Violin 1 4-9, Viola 2 3

Kiu Tung Poon 潘曉彤, Piano

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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