

TAN DUN
PIPA CONCERTO
world premiere recording

HAYASHI
VIOLA CONCERTO
TAKEMITSU
NOSTALGHIA

WU MAN *pipa*
YURI BASHMET *violin & viola*
MOSCOW SOLOISTS

онyx





TAN DUN (1957–)

Concerto for String Orchestra and Pipa (1999)

world premiere recording - first performance at the Pacific Music Festival, Sapporo, Japan, July 1999

1	Andante molto	3.54
2	Allegro	6.36
3	Adagio	4.44
4	Allegro vivace	5.07

TÖRU TAKEMITSU (1930-1996)

5	Nostalgia for solo violin and string orchestra (1987) <i>in memoriam Andrey Tarkovsky</i>	16.13
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Three Film Scores for Strings

6	Music of Training and Rest <i>José Torres</i> (1959)	4.40
7	Funeral Music <i>Black Rain</i> (1989)	4.09
8	Waltz <i>Face of Another</i> (1966)	2.18

HIKARU HAYASHI (1931-)

Concerto-elegia for viola and strings (1995)

commissioned by Mito Chamber Orchestra, dedicated to principal violist Nobuko Imai. First performance in June 1995

9	I	17.35
10	II	12.43

Total Time 78.02

Wu Man pipa (1–4)

Yuri Bashmet *violin* (5), *viola* (9, 10)

Moscow Soloists

Yuri Bashmet *director* (1–4, 6–8)

Roman Balashov *director* (5, 9, 10)

The conceptual and multifaceted Chinese composer **Tan Dun** has made an indelible mark on the world's music scene with a creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical, multimedia, Eastern and Western musical traditions.

Most famous for his Oscar-winning original score for Ang Lee's film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Tan Dun's primary interest lies in creating new works and programmes that reach a new and diverse audience, and those that break the boundaries between the classical and non-classical, East and West, avant-garde and indigenous art forms.

Based in New York, Tan Dun was born in Hunan, China. Having served as a rice-planter and performer with the Peking opera during the Cultural Revolution, he later studied at Beijing's Central Conservatory. There he encountered Western classical music and in particular a range of 20th-century repertoire previously suppressed in China. Tan Dun soon became the leading composer of the "New Wave" of contemporary music in China, which embraced a new cultural pluralism in the arts that began to develop in the early 1980s. He later completed a doctorate in composition at Columbia University, New York where he discovered the experimentalists Edgard Varèse, Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

Central to Tan Dun's body of work are several distinct themes that reflect his personal ideals: "organic music", consisting of works which incorporate elements from the natural world, such as the *Water Concerto for Water, Percussion and Orchestra*; "multimedia with orchestra", including the symbolic work *The Map: Concerto for Cello, Video and Orchestra*; and echoes of shamanistic ritual as seen in *The Gate* and *Ghost Opera*. This work for pipa and string quartet is one of his most popular, and the present Pipa Concerto is an adaptation of some of its music into more conventional concerto form. The inspiration for this chamber composition was the 4000-year-old Chinese tradition at Taoist funerals in which shamans communicate with spirits past and future, creating a dialogue with nature and the human soul.

The Concerto is not simply a re-arrangement of the string quartet part for string orchestra. The earlier composition was in five movements and the players perform on various other instruments including gongs and water bowls, tam-tam, Tibetan bells, and paper. They also vocalize lines from Shakespeare and Chinese folk song. As befits its title it is a clearly theatrical piece of chamber music. The Concerto, on the other hand, is cast in four movements, the players playing only their own instruments, but also contributing stomps, yips, yells sighs and hand-slaps, sometimes in imitation of Eastern instruments.

At the end of the second movement the leader orders a Western-style retuning with the pipa — both a practical necessity and a humorous gesture parodying the attitude of the West towards much non-diatonic Eastern music.

In general, rather than emphasising the traditional roles of the instruments (pipa for the traditional Chinese style and string orchestra for the Classical European), the overall texture displays an effortless fusion of both styles, with strings constantly plucking, sliding, note-bending and improvising.

The main exception is the slow third movement where the pipa opens with a pentatonic melody, followed by muted strings in traditional western contrapuntal lines and harmonies that gradually overlay the Prelude in C# minor from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. The pipa is silent during most of this section, re-entering only near the end, with its own 'Chinese' version of the theme. Wu Man sees it as the heart of the concerto "a slow movement in which Bach and Chinese melody seem to make elegant love to each other, and who could resist that?"

Wu Man herself sums up the concerto as "a giddy merging of traditions and a leapfrogging through music history, in which cultural integration is effortless. The pipa may be exotic in Western music, but it is no longer alien. No single work more exemplifies Tan's range, which extends from uncompromising experimentalism to populism."

Just as Tan Dun is China's best-known composer, so **Tōru Takemitsu** (1930-1996) is certainly the icon of post-war Japanese classical music. Moreover the two are associated: Takemitsu spent his early years in Manchuria, later taught Tan Dun at the Beijing Conservatory, and in 1996 chose him for the *Toronto Glenn Gould Prize in Music Communication*.

Takemitsu himself was largely self-taught, and although he uses an essentially Western contemporary music language (with particular flavours of Debussy, Messiaen, Scriabin, Ravel and Berg), the sensibility and philosophy are rooted firmly in the sounds of Japan — both in its traditional folk music and ancient rituals, but also in the sounds of a modern post-industrial country.

Nostalghia was first performed at the 1987 Edinburgh Festival, a commission from Yehudi Menuhin and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and composed as a tribute to the great Russian film director Andrey Tarkovsky who had died the previous year. Film music was central to Takemitsu's output, with ninety-three film scores composed over forty years, and Tarkovsky was one of his favourite directors. *Nostalghia* (1983) was his last completed film, made in Italy. It deals with a particular kind

of nostalgia — that of the Russian for his homeland. His visual style is poetic, full of images, slow and thoughtful in pace. Takemitsu's tribute reflects that quiet elegiac mood: harmonics and sliding notes hint at traditional Japanese music and it is the shifting harmonic texture beneath the soloist that gives the work its special flavour.

Nostalgia, a work reminiscing about a film director, leads appropriately to some of Takemitsu's actual film music: *José Torres* (1959) is a documentary about boxing filmed in the gyms of New York, evoking bluesy harmonies and melodic turns that are a far cry from what we normally expect of Takemitsu. "Music of Training and Rest" is by turns vigorous (a strong bass riff and a hint of "It ain't necessarily so") and warmly lyrical. *Black Rain* (1989) tells of the effects of the Hiroshima bomb's radiation on a young woman who had walked through the ruins of the city. The film dealt with the guilt that many Japanese felt for the role that their country had played in bringing such destruction to the homeland. The cue "Funeral Music" sustains a sombre mood of poignancy and loss in its pulsing rhythms, arching and falling melody, and gentle dissonances. *Face of Another* (1966) also deals with horrible facial injuries that the leading character suffers in an industrial accident. Fearing the loss of his identity, he undertakes to obtain a new face through plastic surgery. With it comes a new personality and the film turns to the horror genre. Takemitsu's music here often draws on traditional elements, such as this waltz evoking a sense of the loss of the "normality" of the character's life before the accident.

Hikaru Hayashi (1931–) is a prolific composer active in virtually all genres. He studied at the Tokyo University of Arts and, since the early 1950s, has produced a large body of work, including operas on Shakespearean subjects, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, and several orchestral scores (of which this viola concerto is one of the most recent). In *Little Landscapes of Hiroshima*, a stark choral work, he deals with the aftermath of the atomic bombing of the city. He is also credited with over 80 film scores.

The Concerto "Elegia" for Viola and Strings (1995) is the most Western-sounding of the works on this disc and a major addition to the viola repertory. Stylistically Hayashi, while very much his own man, seems to draw inspiration from the Eastern European and Russian masters of the interwar years. The first movement opens quietly with the viola ruminating alone, alternating with interjections from pizzicato strings. Momentum and volume gradually build to a strongly rhythmic, Bartók-like theme, and then soloist and orchestra combine for the first time with the movement's impassioned main theme, based around the interval of a falling minor third. After much interplay the movement seems

to have been drawing to a conclusion but suddenly new energy is found in the form of two other themes, one based on a four-note semiquaver motif reminiscent of Janáček, the other a more lyrical diatonic theme for the soloist. The movement concludes with a return to the “falling third” theme exploiting the full range of the instrument with intricate harmonics and double stopping.

The hypnotic second movement is based around the contrast between a pendulum-like accompaniment figure in the orchestra and the oily chromatic cantilena starting in the solo viola. The viola introduces the second theme which again utilises the falling minor third, the parallel octaves lending a distinctively Eastern flavour. The material is developed with colour, dramatic flair and rather in the manner of a concerto grosso, with solo opportunities for other instruments. The viola takes up the accompaniment figure almost in parody with multiple double-stopping and pizzicati, before reverting to its more orthodox elegiac presentation and the work dies away with a nostalgic reminder of the Eastern theme.

ONYX 2008

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Special thanks to Schloss Neuhausen for
providing the venue and their kind hospitality

Through his virtuosity and strength of personality **Yuri Bashmet** is well known as a viola virtuoso and a champion of new music. He is Principal Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of New Russia, and is the founder and director of the Moscow Soloists. As a soloist he has appeared with all the world's great orchestras, including the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boston, Chicago and Montreal Symphony Orchestras, New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, and the London Symphony Orchestra. He has inspired many composers to write for him, and enjoyed strong collaborations with Sofia Gubaidulina and Alfred Schnittke in particular. Mr. Bashmet is also active as a recording artist, and his recording of Gubaidulina's Viola Concerto for Deutsche Grammophon (DG) earned him a Grammy nomination. Additional DG recordings include Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante featuring Anne-Sophie Mutter, and Bartók's Viola Concerto with the Berliner Philharmoniker and Pierre Boulez. For ONYX he has embarked on a series of recordings with The Moscow Soloists and also recently completed a solo Encores disc with pianist Mikhail Muntian.

The pipa is a lute-like instrument with a history of more than two thousand years. During the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C.-220 A.D.), instruments with long, straight-necks and round resonators with snake skin or wooden soundboards were played with a forward and backward plucking motion that sounded like "pi" and "pa" — hence the name "pipa". During the Tang dynasty, by way of Central Asia, the introduction of a crooked neck lute with a pear-shaped body contributed to the pipa's evolution. Today's instrument consists of twenty-six frets and six ledges arranged as stops and its four strings are tuned respectively to A-D-E-A. The pipa's many left and right hand fingering techniques, rich tonal qualities and resonant timbre give its music a unique expressiveness and beauty.

Born in Hangzhou, China, pipa player **Wu Man** studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she became the first recipient of a master's degree in pipa. Trained in the Pudong School of pipa playing, Ms. Wu is recognized as a champion of traditional repertoire as well as a leading interpreter of contemporary pipa music. She collaborates with some of today's most distinguished musicians and conductors, including David Zinman, Cho-Liang Lin, Christoph Eschenbach, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. A frequent participant in Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project, Ms. Wu recently performed with the group at Carnegie Hall, and also performs and records with the Kronos Quartet. Ms. Wu performs as soloist with many of the world's major orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, and the NDR Symphony Orchestra, Hamburg, and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra.



One of the world's most highly acclaimed chamber ensembles, **The Moscow Soloists** was founded by Yuri Bashmet in March 1992. Comprised of leading young graduates all under 30 from the Moscow Conservatory, the orchestra made its debut in May 1992, and two days later made a highly successful Paris debut at the Salle Pleyel. Since that time, the Moscow Soloists have performed in many other prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Royal Albert Hall and the Barbican Centre in London, the Theatre des Champs Elysees in Paris, the Philharmonie in Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

Additionally, tours have taken the orchestra to the USA, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Israel, Greece and Turkey. Its festival appearances have included concerts at the BBC Proms, the Evian Festival, the Montreux Music Festival, the Sydney Festival and the annual December Nights Festival in Moscow. In 2007 the Soloists celebrated their 15th anniversary worldwide with major tours of the USA and Russia, including the repertoire from this CD.

The Moscow Soloists have worked with such celebrated soloists as Sviatoslav Richter, Gidon Kremer, Mstislav Rostropovich, Maxim Vengerov, Barbara Hendricks, Lynn Harrell and James Galway. Their recordings include the Schnittke Triple Concerto with Kremer, Rostropovich and Bashmet himself (EMI), works by Brahms and Shostakovich (Sony), and their three ONYX recordings, the first two of which were nominated for Grammy Awards.

Moscow Soloists

Yuri Bashmet (director)

Violins I	Stepan Yakovich (leader) Andrei Poskrobko Mikhail Ashurov Irina Shevliakova Olga Kolgatina	Violas	Vitaly Astakhov Nina Matcharadze Roman Balashov Alexander Ilatovsky
Violins II	Sergey Lomovsky Leonid Ferents Maxim Gurevich German Beshulya	Cellos	Alexei Naidenov Alexei Tolstov Nikolay Solonovich
		Double Bass	Maxim Khlopiev

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