

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

SERIES CONCERT
Virtuoso

HYEJI SEO | PIANO

OCT. 23 2023 | 7:30 P.M.

ORGAN RECITAL HALL



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

HYEJI SEO, FACULTY VS RECITAL, OCT. 23, 2023. 7:30 PM

RECITAL PROGRAM

Piano Pieces for Children and Romance, SJ 1123

Tōru Takemitsu
(1930-1996)

The Rain Tree Sketch II: In memoriam Olivier Messiaen, SJ 1072

Beyond the Line for Piano
(America Premiere)

Hojung Yoo
(b.1983)

Ba Ban for Piano

Chen Yi
(b.1953)

INTERMISSION

Yugang sumiao (A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor)

Ma Shui-Long
(1939-2015)

*8 Variations for Piano, based on the theme
'Umma Ya Nuna Ya' (Mother and Old Sister)*

Youngja Lee
(b.1931)

Korean Rhapsody

Un Hoe Park
(1930-2010)

PROGRAM NOTES

About the composer: Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996)

At 16, Tōru Takemitsu firmly decided to become a composer. In the post-war 1940s, exposure to Western music via American radio broadcasts introduced him to jazz and classical composers like Debussy, Copland, and Schoenberg. At 20, he debuted with “Lento in Due Movimenti.”

Primarily self-taught, he sought guidance from mentors like Toshi Ichianagi (European avant-garde) and Fumio Hayasaka (film music). In 1951, he co-founded the “Experimental Workshop,” an avant-garde multimedia group. Takemitsu’s earliest works showcased influences from Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, while his second creative phase saw a deep fascination with French Impressionism, particularly the style of Debussy.

In the early 1960s, Takemitsu introduced two new elements into his compositions: traditional Japanese music, with the deliberate blending of Eastern and Western musical cultures (exemplified in “November Steps” for biwa, shakuhachi, and orchestra), and the representation of natural phenomena (such as “ARCI” for orchestra from 1963-1966). Many of his compositions draw inspiration from the art of Japanese gardens, using symbolic musical metaphors.

Throughout his career, Takemitsu received numerous awards and accolades, including the Prix Italia, the German Consulate Prize, the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, and the Glenn Gould Prize, among others. Takemitsu taught composition at Yale University and received numerous invitations for visiting professorships from universities in the USA, Canada, and Australia. He passed away in Tokyo on February 20, 1996.

Piano Pieces for Children

The composition “Piano Pieces for Children” was aired on NHK Educational Television from October 1979 to March 1980. It was created specifically for the children’s show known as “Piano no Okeiko” (Piano Lessons), following a request from the program’s instructor, Naoyuki Inoue

Romance for Piano

“Romance for piano” was originally composed in 1948. In the subsequent year, 1949, Takemitsu created a revised edition of this composition, dedicating it to Yasuji Kiyose, the sole composer who provided Takemitsu with guidance on his work. Unfortunately, there is no available information regarding the first performance of this piece. The published sheet music is a revised edition prepared by the English pianist and composer Paul Crossley, drawing from the versions of 1948 and 1949.

The Rain Tree Sketch II: In memoriam Olivier Messiaen

Takemitsu composed "Rain Tree Sketch II" in 1992 as a tribute to the influential French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992). This piece was specifically composed for a concert titled "Hommage à Olivier Messiaen" at Les Semaines Musicales Internationales d'Orléans, France, and it had its premiere performed by Alain Neveux on October 24, 1992.

The title of the composition likely draws inspiration from a passage in a novel by Kenzaburō Ōe, which references the mystical rain tree whose tiny leaves continue to release moisture as raindrops long after the rain has stopped. "Rain Tree Sketch II" also serves as a contemplative meditation on the ebb and flow of life. Notably, it marks Takemitsu's final piano composition, with his initial "Rain Tree Sketch" composed in 1982.

Its harmonic language bears resemblance to the styles of Debussy and Messiaen, using chords for tonal color and timbre rather than adhering to strict harmonic progressions. Like Messiaen, Takemitsu incorporates recurring motifs, such as an ascending three-note broken chord figure, and strategically placed silences to craft a meticulously nuanced atmosphere with a rich array of colors. Directions within the score, like "celestially light" and "joyful," contribute to the metaphysical character of the composition, enhancing its evocative nature.

About the composer: Hojung Yoo (b.1983)

Hojung Yoo was born in South Korea and has worked in various fields of music, including classical music, film scoring, choral, and theory. She finished her PhD at Han-yang University and recently has been working as a lecturer in composition and music theory at universities in South Korea. Her recent activities as a composer include 2nd prize in 'The 13th Piano Composition Competition Fidelio' in Spain, the finalist for the music of 'The International Short Film Forum' in Seoul, a representative of South Korea at 'New Music's Day', 'Women in Leadership & Philanthropy Program' in the University of South Florida, 'Korean Choirs Forum' in Seoul, guitar recital in Germany 23-24 season, collaborating with guitarist Stefan Barcsay. Yoo's works were played by Ensemble Wiro, Ensemble Con Spirito, Ensemble TenTen, Ensemble 318, Trio Lin, Paju City Choir, and Choir Passione Voce. She has several recording works of an orchestra, ensemble, and songs.

Beyond the Line for Piano

Life and death, dignity and oppression - these are the fundamental themes that underpin our existence. The former pertains to our basic survival, while the latter serves as the binary yardstick against which we measure the essence of humanity. I **want** to pose a question: How many instances of preserving dignity can be found in the footsteps of those who lacked power in the past? Can we confidently assert that all individuals are guaranteed equal rights, transcending the boundaries of biological gender and race? **None of us can make** such a claim. Nonetheless, our present state is a testament to the persistent efforts of individuals who have tirelessly fought to have their voices heard. I aspire to lend my voice to those who

continue the arduous struggle in their spheres, and I hope that collectively, we can surmount barriers and reach the ideal we all strive for.

About the composer: Chen Yi (b. 1953)

Chen Yi, originally from Guangzhou, China, embarked on her musical journey at a remarkably young age, commencing her studies in violin and piano at the tender age of three. She went on to earn both her bachelor's and master's degrees in music from the Beijing Central Conservatory, and later, a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree from Columbia University in New York. Chen Yi's mentors in composition include notable figures such as Chou Wen-Chung, Mario Davidovsky, Wu Zu-Qiang, and Alexander Goehr.

At present, Dr. Chen holds the esteemed position of Lorena Searcey Cravens Millsap Missouri Distinguished Professor in Music Composition at the Conservatory of the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Her academic journey has also encompassed a role on the composition faculty at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore from 1996 to 1998. Additionally, she has served as Composer-in-Residence with various institutions and ensembles, including the Women's Philharmonic, Chanticleer, and the Aptos Creative Arts Center in San Francisco, with support from Meet the Composer's New Residencies program.

Chen Yi's prolific career has been marked by numerous commissions from esteemed institutions and performers, such as the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Singapore Symphony, and many others. These commissions have been generously funded by foundations like Koussevitzky, Fromm, Ford, Rockefeller, and Roche, as well as organizations like Chamber Music America, Creative Work Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts, among others.

Her compositions have received wide recognition and have been performed by leading orchestras and soloists across the United States, Europe, and Asia. Dr. Chen has been honored with fellowships from prestigious entities including the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has also received notable accolades such as the Ives Living Award, the Eddie Medora King Composition Prize, and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005.

Ba Ban for Piano

In 1999, Carnegie Hall commissioned Chen Yi to create the piano composition "Ba Ban" as part of their millennium celebration. This composition draws its fundamental elements from the renowned Chinese traditional instrumental piece "Ba Ban" and her own Piano Concerto, which is entirely rooted in the structure, rhythmic patterns, and musical notes of the original folk melody. Additionally, the piece reflects the overall stylistic characteristics of Chinese mountain song singing and traditional Chinese instrumental performance, influencing the textures and sounds within the composition.

Most Chinese folk solo pieces typically revolve around a single theme, featuring sectional developments with varying tempos, playing techniques, and embellishments on important melody notes. This approach inspired to structure her solo piano piece into four sections. It begins with the theme, introduced in the initial seven-measure phrase, closely based on the pitch material of the opening phrase of the Chinese folk tune “Ba Ban” (which translates to Eight Beats): Bb, Bb, Eb, Ab, Gb; Db, Eb, Gb; Eb, Gb, Gb, Bb, Ab. Beyond the pentatonic pitch material from “Ba Ban,” she also incorporated two additional pitch materials and intertwined them with the “Ba Ban” theme. One is a 12-tone row (B, F, C#, D, F#, G#, A, D#, E, Bb, G, C), and the other is an ascending five-note motif (Bb, C, C#, F#, A). These materials are used both horizontally and vertically in their original forms or transposed versions, sometimes simultaneously within a phrase.

The folk melody “Ba Ban” consists of eight phrases, each containing eight beats, except for the fifth phrase, which contains an extra four beats, marking the golden section in the middle. The rhythmic grouping of the original “Ba Ban” follows the pattern of 3 + 2 + 3, 3 + 2 + 3, 4 + 4, 3 + 2 + 3, 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 2, 4 + 4, 5 + 3, 4 + 4. This rhythmic pattern is fully presented at the highest range of the keyboard during the composition’s coda.

About the composer: Ma Shui-Long (1939-2015)

Ma Shui-Long was born July 17, 1939, and grew up in northern Taiwan’s coastal cities of Ji-long and Jiufen. Self-taught on the piano and in music theory, he studied composition under Xiao Erhua at the National Institute of the Arts in Taiwan.

After his studies, Ma returned to Ji-long, teaching and fostering local musical talent. In 1972, he received a scholarship to study under Oskar Sigmund at the Regensburg Kirchenmusikschule in Germany. He taught at various institutions in Taiwan, including the Taipei National University of the Arts.

In 1986, Ma was granted a Fulbright Scholarship, allowing him to lecture at prestigious institutions such as Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. This opportunity expanded his reach and influence in the field of music. In 2002, Ma’s music was showcased at the Lincoln Center in New York City, receiving enthusiastic acclaim. This success opened doors to performances and lectureships across the United States.

Ma’s compositions evolved from Taiwanese folk themes to avant-garde dissonance and later, a fusion of Western and Eastern elements. His teaching centered on incorporating Chinese and Taiwanese musical elements into education. His approach to composition became a central theme in his teaching career as he designed college courses aimed at guiding students in embracing Chinese and Taiwanese musical elements in a profound and meaningful manner.

Yugang sumiao (A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor)

Yugang sumiao was composed in 1969. *Yugang sumiao* has four movements: “Rain,” “Harbor Views on Rainy Nights,” “The Girl who Collects Seashells,” and “At the Temple Gate”. This solo piano composition captures the essence of different moments and landscapes in his hometown of Ji-long. Alongside invoking the spirit of Taiwanese folk music, these pieces also portray the sounds of various traditional Chinese instruments, such as the zheng, renowned for its distinctive glissandi tones.

About the composer: Youngja Lee (b. 1931)

Youngja Lee, born in Wonju, Korea, in 1931, is one of significant figures in contemporary music in Korea. Through her dedication to music society, she is a living example to many musicians. She is the first female composer of Western classical music in Korea. She co-founded the Korean Society of Women Composers in 1981 and has served as the first president of KSWC for 13 years. And she has taught more than 200 female composers in Korea.

Despite of hardships of Japanese occupation (1910-1945) and Korean War (1950-1953), she completed her study in Korea at Ehwa Women’s University. She then pursued further education abroad, studying at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Paris Conservatoire under the guidance of Olivier Messiaen.

Her music shows unique intercultural compositions with mixtures of Western and traditional Korean music. Throughout her career, Lee has consistently received recognition and commissions for significant national events. Notable compositions include her “Celebration Overture” in 1975, created for Korea’s Thirtieth Liberation Day, and her “Fiftieth Liberation Day Hymn” in 1995. In the 1970s, the newly established Seoul Music Festival showcased Lee’s work for five consecutive years, commencing with her “Violin Sonata” in 1969 and culminating with her inaugural “Piano Concerto” in 1974. In more recent times, Lee was honored with the prestigious Grand Prize at the Korean Music Awards in 2010.

8 Variations for Piano, based on the Korean children’s song ‘Umma Ya Nuna Ya’

This was composed in 1996 by Young Ja Lee. Lee composed this piece in memory of him when her younger brother deceased.

The theme takes entire melody of children’s song, ‘Umma Ya Nuna Ya’, which means ‘mother and older sister’. The melody is very sad and it uses the pentatonic mode, which is an excellent tool to show the Korean peoples’ *han* (‘한’ in Korean and ‘恨’ in Chinese, pronounced *ha:n*). *Han* is often used as deep sorrow, regret, and rage. Although there’s not an exact English equivalent to this very specific Korean concept, but it can be understood as a deep internalized and suffered emotion due to Korea’s long history over 5,000 years of socio, economic and political oppression. And oppression by the Japanese occupation (1910-1945) in particular.

The lyric of the melody is written by renowned poet, Sowol Kim. Kim is one of the significant figures in Korea's literature during early 20th century. He often uses Korean's universal emotion in his poet, by using local folk language and genre. Those universal emotions that he used are heavily related his hardship of life, and the oppression of the Korean people for losing not just their homeland, but every Korean-related aspect by the Japanese. Many of his poem is considered resistant poem. And this 'Umma Ya Nuna Ya' is also written in 1922 during the Japanese occupation. The lyric has underlying messages against imperialism and war, yearning for independence. Therefore, it is well showed *han*.

The *8 piano variations for piano* shows an example of mixture of traditional Korean music and 20th century's European music where she spent time study abroad. She uses perfect intervals, pentatonic scale, and folk melody to make Korean sound in this music. At the same time, she combined compositional techniques by Debussy, Bartok and Stravinsky with French Impressionism tone color, frequent meter change, polytonality, and percussive writing. Lee also used 'jangdan' which is Korean traditional rhythmic pattern. This 'jangdan' is easily attached to the use of accents on beat and meter changes and moving forward motion. And the use of Korean traditional rhythmic pattern gives a good example of creating unique sound effect with Western music technique.

Full text of the children's song:

Korean:

엄마야 누나야 강변 살자.
들에는 반짝이는 금모래빛
뒷문 밖에는 갈잎의 노래,
엄마야 누나야 강변 살자

English:

Mother and dear older sister let's go
to live by the riverside.
There is sand shining like gold and light
on the riverside.
Through the back door will come
the song of the rustling reeds,
Mother and dear older sister let's
live by the riverside.

About the composer: Un Hoe Park (1930-2010)

Un Hoe Park was born in Jinyang, Gyeongsangnam-do. In 1947, he entered the composition department of Seoul National University's College of Music but had to leave school when he was drafted into the Marine Corps during the Korean War. He graduated from Dongguk University with a degree in English literature in 1961 and completed his graduate studies in economics at Korea University in 1964 and later at Dongguk University in 1980. From 1975

to 1978, he served as the president of the Korea Automobile Insurance Company, and from 1981 to 1995, he worked as a professor at Sungkyunkwan University's School of Business. His representative works include 'Korean Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra,' and choral compositions such as 'Until the Peonies Bloom.' He also composed a violin sonata and a song called 'River.' He served as the Honorary Chairman of the Korean Composers' Association.

Korean Rhapsody

This piece, composed in 1975, draws its inspiration from traditional Korean folk songs including "Sae-ya Sae-ya" (Bird, Bird), "Milyang Arirang," "Doraji" (Bell Flower), and "Taryeong." The composition follows a Rondo structure with distinct sections: an introduction featuring "Doraji," a development section, "Milyang Arirang" in the third and seventh sections, "Taryeong" making a single appearance in the sixth section, and "Sae-ya Sae-ya" serving as a theme in the fifth and eleventh sections. Notably, the fifth and eleventh sections each consist of 8 bars where the "Sae-ya Sae-ya" theme is prominent. This theme is played in an Adagio tempo, emerging only briefly before transitioning to the next part of the Rondo. It's more fitting to regard this as an insertion, playing a role akin to an Interlude rather than being an integral part of the Rondo. In the eleventh section, "Sae-ya Sae-ya" alternates with the fragmented "Doraji" theme from the introduction.

Described as a modern composition, *Korean Rhapsody* retains the essence of traditional folk themes with minimal alteration, ensuring its accessibility and recognizability to a wide audience. With a performance duration of approximately 7 minutes, it employs a pianistic style, infusing the piece with vibrancy, and concludes dramatically with a powerful "fff," enhancing its effectiveness in performance.

BIOGRAPHY

DR. HYEJI SEO is a passionate and accomplished pianist in solo and collaborative performances, spanning a diverse range of musical genres and styles. Her musical journey has taken her to prestigious venues across the United States, Europe, and Korea.

In 2016, Dr. Seo made her debut at the Carnegie Weill Recital Hall in New York, setting the stage for a prolific career. Her performances have graced stages across continents, including the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium, where she was invited as the first-place winner of the International Music Competition 'Brussels' Grand Prize Virtuoso. She has also been a featured Guest Artist at the events such as the Gala Concert at the Kimmel Art Center in Philadelphia, the Triumph Music Festival, and the EOULIM Concert Series at the Cheongju Art Center in Korea.

Throughout her career, Dr. Seo has won in several international competitions, including the Ise-Shima International Piano Competition in Japan, the Bradshaw & Buono International Piano Competition in the USA, and the American Protégé International Piano and String Competition, among others. Her performances have graced prestigious venues such as Carnegie Weill Hall, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Jacopone da Todi Concert Hall, Kimmel Art Center, Kumho Art Center, Youngsan Art Hall, and Cheongju Art Center.

As a concerto competition winner, Dr. Seo has performed with orchestras, including Seoul National University, Sookmyung Women's University, and Western Illinois University. She has also been invited to perform at events like the Piano Gala Concert for the 110th anniversary founding of Sookmyung Women's University and the Young Artist Debut Concert sponsored by Music Education News in Seoul.

Beyond her distinguished performance career, Dr. Seo is a dedicated educator with a passion for teaching a diverse range of students in various settings. She has conducted guest coaching sessions in both the United States and Korea and has served as an adjudicator at the MTNA Colorado Piano Competition. Her teaching experience spans institutions like Colorado State University, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Michigan State University, Western Illinois University, St. Pius X School, and Expressions Music Academy, Michigan. Her commitment to piano pedagogy is further demonstrated through her presentation on the research of piano pedagogy with young musicians on the autism spectrum at the MTNA Collegiate Chapters in 2018.

In addition to her performance and teaching endeavors, Dr. Seo is dedicated to promoting new and underrepresented music, particularly works by lesser-known composers from diverse backgrounds. Her concert series, 'The Music We Write' focuses on music from Asian, female, and culturally diverse composers, presenting their unique identities and cultures. She also enjoys collaborating with other forms of art, such as visual, film, and media arts, to create interdisciplinary performances on such topics.

Dr. Seo is a dynamic and sought-after pianist and chamber musician. Her extensive experience spans a wide spectrum of instrumental, vocal, choral, symphonic, chamber, and operatic performances, collaborating with professional musicians and guest artists alike. She has served as a collaborative pianist and coach at Michigan State University, Western Illinois University, Centro Studi Carlo Della Giacoma Encore Series in Italy, and Ingham Festival Chorale, Michigan. She has also made meaningful contributions to sacred music as an organist and interim music director in various places, including St. Jude, St. Pius X, St. Andrew Kim, and St. Martha in Michigan.

Her primary piano studies were with Kyungmi Kim, Hyesoo Jeon, Tammie Walker, Zhihua Tang, and Deborah Moriarty. She has furthered her education through additional studies with Hae Sun Paik, Alan Chow, Zhe Tang, Robert Roux, Michael Lewin, Klaus Schilde, Sontraud Speidel, Aviram Reichert, and Laurent Cabasso. Her educational achievements include a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance, a master's degree in Collaborative Piano from Michigan State University, and bachelor's and master's degrees from Sookmyung Women's University and Western Illinois University, respectively. During her studies, she has been fully supported by Graduate Assistantship, Ralph Votapek Scholarship, and Dixon Collaborative Pianist Award.

In 2018, Dr. Seo joined the faculty at Colorado State University as an instructor of collaborative piano, where she continues to share her love for music and performance with students and audiences alike. Her dedication to music education and her passion for the piano remain at the core of her artistic journey.

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