

Bernard Tan

A Classical Overture
Piano Concerto
Symphony No. 1



Toh Chee Hung *piano*
Singapore Symphony Orchestra
Lan Shui *conductor*

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BERNARD TAN TIONG GIE



Born in Singapore in 1943, Bernard Tan Tiong Gie was educated at the Anglo-Chinese School, Singapore, the University of Singapore (Bachelor of Science with Honours in Physics, 1965) and Oxford University (Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Science, 1968). He is a Chartered Engineer and Member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (U.K.), Fellow of the Institute of Physics (U.K) and Fellow of the Institute of Physics, Singapore. He studied piano with Arthur Tan, Lee Seok Mui, Lin Kwai Eng, Benjamin Khoo and Douglas Tan, and is a Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music and a Licentiate in Music as well as a Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London.

He joined the then University of Singapore (now NUS, the National University of Singapore) in 1968, where he has served as Acting Head of Music, Associate Director

of the Centre for Musical Activities, Dean of Science, Head of Physics and Dean of Students. He is currently a Professor of Physics at NUS, where he is also Chairman of the Centre for Remote Imaging, Sensing and Processing (CRISP) and the Singapore Synchrotron Light Source (SSL).

He sits on the boards of Keppel Telecommunications and Transportation Ltd, the Singapore Symphonia Company Ltd and CSA Holdings, and is Chairman of Keppel Credit Union and Cadi Scientific Pte Ltd. He is also Chairman of the National Internet Advisory Committee and the National Advisory Committee on Laboratory Animal Research. He has been Chairman of Keppel Hitachi Zosen, IMCB Holdings, the Singapore Youth Orchestra and the Singapore Arts Festival Steering Committee, and has served on the National Science and Technology Board, the

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National Computer Board, the National Parks Board, the National Library Board and the National Arts Council, and the boards of Keppel Corporation Ltd, Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay and the Singapore Dance Theatre.

He has published 89 scientific papers in international peer-reviewed journals. As a composer, his output includes a symphony, two overtures, a piano concerto, four sinfoniettas and many choral works. U.S. music publisher Neil Kjos has published a number of his choral works, and his Piano Concerto was premiered in January 2002 by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

He has been awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver), the Public Service Medal, the Public Service Star and the Public Service Star (Bar).

Website: www.physics.nus.edu.sg/~phytanb

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TOH CHEE HUNG *piano*



Born in Singapore, Toh Chee Hung studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where she won many prizes including the Christie Moore Award and the top piano prize for performing - the MacFarren Gold Medal. After attaining various diplomas, she undertook further research in the Hungarian tradition of piano performance with Ilonka Kuszler-Deckers in Milan, Italy.

Toh Chee Hung has performed in London and many parts of Britain, the U.S.A., Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey and the Far East. She has recorded for radio and television in many countries, including B.B.C. Radio 3 and the World Service. Before residing in London, she was the holder of various professorial posts in Switzerland.

After being the only pianist to win the East-West Artist Auditions in New York, she made her debut at the then Carnegie Recital Hall, which received high acclaim in the New York Times.

More recent engagements have included the Warwick Festival, recital tours in Britain, Germany, Holland, the U.S.A. and Canada; concerto appearances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Barbican Centre and St. Martin-in-the Fields, in London and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C..

With the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under Libor Pesek, she performed in the Singapore Arts Festival. Future engagements include concerto appearances in London and the Far East, and recital tours of the U.S.A. and Canada.

LAN SHUI *conductor*



Lan Shui joined the SSO as Music Director in 1997. In support of Asian-influenced works, Lan Shui is passionate about premiering and commissioning works by Asian and Singaporean composers.

He currently divides his time between the SSO, his post as Principal Guest Conductor of Denmark's Aalborg Symphony and engagements with other orchestras. He has conducted many orchestras including Baltimore Symphony, Berlin Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, Houston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Malmö Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Munich Chamber Orchestra and Tampere Philharmonic.

Born in China, Shui made his professional conducting debut with the Central Philharmonic Orchestra in Beijing in 1986

and was later appointed Conductor of the Beijing Symphony. In 1990 he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Summer Festival, where he came to the attention of David Zinman who invited him to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as Conducting Affiliate in 1992. From 1994 to 1997, he was Associate Conductor to Neeme Jarvi at the Detroit Symphony. In the same period he assisted Kurt Masur at the New York Philharmonic and conducted the Cleveland Orchestra in Paris as part of Boulez's young conductors' project.

He is the recipient of several international awards, amongst them kudos from the Beijing Arts Festival, New York Tcherpnin Society, 37th Besançon Conductors Competition in France and Boston University Distinguished Alumni Award.



A premier Asian orchestra gradually gaining recognition around the world, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra aims to enrich the local cultural scene, serving as a bridge between the musical traditions of Asia and the West. A professional orchestra consisting of over 90 full-time musicians, many of whom are Singaporean, the Orchestra now makes its performing home at the Esplanade Concert Hall, and also performs regularly at other venues and open spaces.

The Orchestra's repertoire spans the all-time favourites and masterpieces to cutting-edge premieres of new compositions. In support of Singaporean talent, local musicians feature prominently

as soloists in the concert season, and local composers feature on the Composers-in-Residence programme, inaugurated in 2000. Since its inception in 1979, the SSO has toured Italy, Paris, Hungary, Spain, Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey, China, Hong Kong, Japan and Germany.

Winning remarkable acclaim were the SSO recordings of the first-ever complete symphony cycle of Alexander Tcherepnin. The SSO has also recorded the music of Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Bright Sheng and Richard Yardumian. Artists heard on SSO recordings include Evelyn Glennie, Cho-Liang Lin, Noriko Ogawa, Christian Lindberg and Martin Frost.

A Classical Overture

Notes by Bernard Tan

A Classical Overture was written in the early 1990s as a companion piece to the composer's *Symphony No. 1* (originally for a university orchestra which however did not perform the work). An energetic and cheerful curtain raiser, it was given its premiere on 30 August 2003 by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) under Lan Shui, who also performed the work with the SSO in Japan later the same year. The *Overture* and *Symphony*, together with the composer's *Piano Concerto*, make

up a set of three pieces with similar instrumentation: that of the standard classical orchestra i.e. double woodwinds, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, strings and timpani. The three pieces (which form a set of works making up a conventional orchestral concert: *Overture - Concerto - Symphony*) are also linked thematically, with the main theme of *A Classical Overture* also used in the slow movement of the *Piano Concerto* and the finale of the *Symphony No. 1*.

Piano Concerto

Notes by Bernard Tan

The *Piano Concerto* was premiered by Singapore pianist Toh Chee Hung (for whom it was written) and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra under Lan Shui on 11 January 2002. The concerto is in three movements. The first movement, marked *Allegro*, opens with a flourish from the piano's repeated pattern which forms the background to the movement's other themes, all with a somewhat Asian flavour. Heard on the strings and later the piano, the main theme appears in both major

and minor forms, while the lyrical second subject is first heard on the piano. Midway, the oboe introduces a new theme. An uneasy tension between major and minor underlies much of this movement.

In the subdued second movement, marked *Andantino*, the main theme is introduced by the clarinet. The sombre mood is briefly lightened by a simple folk-like melody first heard on the oboe; this melody is later allowed a moment of glory by the full

Piano Concerto

orchestra over accompanying piano arpeggios. However, the sombre mood takes over again and builds to a grim march-like climax for piano and orchestra, before the tumult dies down and the movement ends in a gentle whisper.

The pianist enters the finale, marked *Vivace*, with an exuberant tune in quavers (which recurs during the movement in rondo-like fashion) sweeping up and down over quickly repeated orchestral chords.

Contrast is provided through a more staid theme by the clarinet, forming the basis for a central fugato leading to a climax. Other episodes are provided by a dance-like tune with a triplet figure, and a darker sweeping melody in quavers, both first heard on the piano. The movement ends reasonably cheerfully as the staid melody is combined with the rondo tune, but the repeated motivic pattern of the first movement is allowed to reassert itself briefly before the concluding pianistic flourish.

Symphony No. 1

Notes by Bernard Tan

Symphony No. 1 was commissioned by the Singapore Youth Orchestra (SYO) and premiered by the SYO under Vivien Goh on 3 August 1989. The work was subsequently dedicated to the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and featured on NTU's inauguration CD in 1991 at the request of NTU's then President, Prof Cham Tao Soon (who is the Chairman of the Singapore Symphonia Company Ltd). It is in a conservative and more or less neo-classical style and has four movements. The first movement, marked *Moderato*, unfolds gently with the unassuming principal subject on the bassoons. The brooding second subject is first heard on the lower strings under repeated wind chords.

The second movement, marked *Vivace*, is a scherzo in which the urgent semiquaver figures with which it begins are seldom absent. The slow movement, marked *Andante*, is dominated by the elegaic principal theme introduced by the clarinet over a dotted accompaniment on the cellos. After a brief middle section, the elegiac theme returns on flute and oboe, over a pizzicato string accompaniment.

The dance-like main theme of the lively final movement, marked *Allegro*, is complemented by a lilting second subject first heard on oboe and bassoon. The dance-like subject and its opening motif permeate the movement, and is reiterated by the entire orchestra in octaves in the final bars of the movement.

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1 A Classical Overture 5:58

Piano Concerto

2 Allegro 8:15

3 Andantino 7:20

4 Vivace 6:49

Symphony No. 1

5 Moderato 7:46

6 Vivace: scherzo 4:51

7 Andante 6:16

8 Allegro 7:25

Total duration of CD 54:45

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Cover Picture:

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Producer: Ulli Schneider

Balance Engineer: Hans Kipfer

Recorded 22-27 August 2003

Victoria Concert Hall, Singapore

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SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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