



Classical Allusion

SELECTED WORKS BY JULIAN YU

*** Concerto for Marimba
and Small Orchestra**

First movement 8'03" **1**
Second movement 4'11" **2**
Third movement 6'17" **3**

Robert Clarke, marimba
John Arcaro, timpani
The Academy of Melbourne
Brett Kelly, Conductor

*** Variations on a
Theme of Paganini**

Theme - Moderato 0'36" **4**
Variation one - Allegro 1'05" **5**
Variation two - Adagio con amore 2'02" **6**
Variation three 0'45" **7**
Variation four - Grazioso 0'48" **8**
Variation five - Vivace 0'45" **9**
Variation six - Giocoso 0'31" **10**
Variation seven 1'39" **11**
Variation eight 0'54" **12**
Variation nine - Piacere 0'56" **13**
Variation ten - Espressivo 1'44" **14**
Variation eleven - Agitato 0'25" **15**
Variation twelve - Animato 1'24" **16**

Australia Ensemble

Scintillation II 17
for piano,
two vibraphones
and glockenspiel
7'31"

Synergy
Colin Piper,
piano

Scintillation III 18
3'52"

Laura Chislett, flute
Stephanie McCallum, piano

**Trio for Violin,
Cello and Piano**

First movement 10'02" **19**
Second movement 3'31" **20**
Third movement 6'13" **21**

Trio Melbourne
Isin Cakmakcioglu, violin
Rachel Atkinson, cello
Roger Heagney, piano

Classical Allusion

SELECTED
WORKS BY
JULIAN YU

* premier
performances
recorded
live in
concert

The title of this CD, *Classical Allusion*, refers to the fact that most of the works here are linked to the Western classical music repertoire. The composer has deliberately taken well-known Western works as his starting point in the composition process (with the exception of *Scintillation II* and *Scintillation III*, which sprang from his own piano improvisation). On the other hand, his method of composition is actually a traditional Chinese one predominant in the instrumental folk music of that country. According to this tradition, a pre-existing piece is ornamented and embellished in certain ways until it becomes something quite new. In traditional China, folk music was ornamented over and over again as it passed down the generations, each new version becoming the base for further ornamentation until its origin was completely lost. But when Western classical works are subjected to this kind of ornamentation, the result is something different. On the surface the compositions on this CD reveal little perceptible Asian influence, even though the thinking behind them is steeped in oriental musical tradition.

The composer says, “For me, the Chinese practice of ornamentation is an interesting and unique way of creating music. In inheriting my musical tradition,

I consider this concept to be much more important than the use of specific Chinese musical material”. It was Yu’s composition teacher in Japan, well-known composer Professor Joji Yuasa, who first inspired Yu with his views that the concept and structural thinking behind the music is of paramount importance.

Concerto for Marimba and Small Orchestra is an exploration of rhythmic patterns and unusual timbres, with texture and elements that draw on mainstream music and Afro-American trends. It has three movements, and retains other characteristics of the traditional concerto such as virtuosity in the solo part (with the marimba soloist employing multiple mallets flying over the instrument), the symphonic development of the orchestral part, and a cadenza (here mostly with the timpanist).

The concerto is based on well-known works by JS Bach (first and third movements) and Debussy (second movement). It evolves through the manipulation and ornamentation of these existing works, until they become virtually new constructs.

The soloist is presented with a severe challenge, with rapid passagework and chords requiring four sticks. A quasi-symphonic opening movement gives way to a middle with a brilliant cadenza which synchronises with the orchestral timpani.

This work was premiered by percussionist Robert Clarke and the Academy of Melbourne under Brett Kelly in 1996.

Variations on a Theme of Paganini — When the Australia Ensemble approached Julian Yu to write a piece for them in 1994, he immediately felt inspired to try some variations of his own of Paganini’s famous theme. His interest deepened when he saw a record cover featuring a “family tree” diagram of the “offspring” from this theme. An incredible number of composers had tried their hand at it: the classical branch alone included among others Liszt, Schumann, Brahms and Rachmaninov, while more modern composers were also numerous, including Lutoslawski and Ichiyanagi.

The version of the Theme and Variations that Yu chose as his starting point was already second generation: Brahms’s version (Book 2), and he worked on it until it became a new piece. He did not strictly follow the order of the original, and there are some omissions. Altogether the resultant work consists of a theme and eleven variations.

Scintillation II was the first chamber work that Julian Yu wrote after migrating from China to Australia in 1985. Composed in 1987, it received its first performance in Tokyo that same year as a winner of the 56th Japan Music Concours.

The music is based on a mode characterised by perfect fourth and minor second intervals, which is responsible for the strong pentatonic flavour. There are three voices: the middle one has a logical structure and provides a framework for the piece, while the other two embellish it and are freer and more intuitive.

The title came after the music. *Scintillation* not only describes the surface of the piece – the brightness of the metallic instruments – but also reflects the flowery nature of the music. The Chinese character for *scintillation* is made up of two parts, one meaning *fire* and the other *joy* or *music*.

In **Scintillation III**, the flute develops the melodic aspect of Scintillation II.

Trio for piano, violin and cello was originally written for piano quartet, commissioned by Ensemble I. Later, Trio Melbourne expressed a strong interest in the piece, and requested the composer to rewrite it for piano trio. The rearranged piece is no simpler or less dense than the original: the viola part, no longer required, has simply been transferred to the other instruments, mainly the piano.

This trio is based on Brahms' first symphony. It is in sonata form, except that the development is replaced by a contrasting slow section, in which the

strings carry the theme from Brahms' second movement while the piano plays a solo part above.

Julian Yu, who was born in Beijing in 1957, surprised his non-musical family by writing his first composition - a one-act Peking opera - at the age of twelve. He went on to study composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and later joined the teaching staff there. From 1980 to 1982 he studied at the Tokyo College of Music under Joji Yuasa and Schin-ichiro Ikebe. He migrated to Australia in 1985. In 1988 he was selected for a Composition Fellowship at Tanglewood, where he studied under Hans Werner Henze and Oliver Knussen, and was awarded the Koussevitzky Tanglewood Composition Prize for that year.

He has written many works for orchestra, instrumental and choral groups, theatre and opera, commissioned by organisations such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), IRCAM, the City of Munich, Australia Ensemble, Melbourne International Festival, Synergy Percussion and Chamber Made Opera. His most recent commission is from the BBC for the Promenade Concerts in 2000. Julian Yu's music has won over 20 awards in the USA, Japan, Italy, France, P.R. China, and his adopted Australia. In 1991 and 1994, an international jury unanimously selected his work for the

Paul Lowin Orchestral Prize. Established in 1991 and awarded every three years, this is the highest award available to an Australian composer.

His music has been performed by many orchestras and ensembles worldwide such as Ensemble InterContemporain, Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, BBC Symphony Orchestra, the orchestra of the Tanglewood Music Centre, and the Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras. It has also featured at international contemporary music festivals such as the Munich Biennale, ISCM World Music Days, the Asian Composer's League (ACL) Festivals, and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND SMALL ORCHESTRA

Robert Clarke / marimba

John Arcaro / timpani

The Academy of Melbourne

Brett Kelly / conductor

Recording producer: Trevor Welby

Recording engineers:

Nick Mierisch and Melissa May

Recorded live in concert at the Hawthorn Town Hall, June 1996

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Post-production editing: Vaughan McAlley

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF PAGANINI

Australia Ensemble

Recording producer: Hans May

Recording engineer: Yossi Gabbay

Recorded live in concert at the Townsville Civic Theatre in July 1997 at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, Townsville

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Post-production editing: Vaughan McAlley

SCINTILLATION II

for piano, two vibraphones and glockenspiel

Synergy / Michael Askill, Ian Cleworth, Rebecca Lagos, Colin Piper, piano

Recording producer: Susan Shineberg

Recording engineer: Craig Preston

Recorded in Eugene Gossens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney, April 1993

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SCINTILLATION III

Laura Chislett / flute

Stephanie McCallum / piano

Producer: Ralph Lane

Recording engineer: Allan Maclean

Recorded in the Eugene Gossens Hall, ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney, September 1993

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TRIO FOR VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO

Trio Melbourne

Isin Cakmakcioglu / violin

Rachel Atkinson / cello

Roger Heagney / piano

Recording engineers: Martin Wright and Vaughan McAlley

Recorded in Move Records studio in 1997

This work originally appeared on Move Records "20th Century Piano Trios" (Trio Melbourne)

All works on this CD are published by Universal Edition (London) Ltd. Web-site: <http://www.uemusic.at/>

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[Concerto for Marimba notes are based on programme note by Martin Buzacott]

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Julian Yu's musical language is imbued with a high degree of elegance and expressiveness, which are both enhanced by an impeccable craft and special attention to detail. His music creates a sonic world, which is constantly changing, and always being framed within a clear sense of shape and direction. Without being overtly referential, his music also shows a strong connection with the Western musical tradition as well as with his Chinese roots, thus, creating a very individual musical discourse.

*Jorge Liderman
Professor of Music
University of California, Berkeley*