

The background of the entire image is a photograph of a tranquil landscape. In the distance, several jagged, misty mountains rise above a calm body of water. The water's surface is still, reflecting the pale sky and the distant peaks. In the lower right foreground, several pieces of dark, gnarled driftwood are partially submerged in the water. Their forms are clearly reflected in the glassy surface of the lake. The overall color palette is muted, consisting of soft blues, greys, and earthy browns, creating a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere.

50 CHINESE FOLK SONGS

JULIAN YU

KE LIN PIANO

ARRANGED BY
Julian Yu

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Ke Lin
PIANO

- 1 Flying the Kite (Hebei) 0'32"
- 2 Gada Meilin (Inner Mongolia) 0'53"
- 3 The Little Lover (Inner Mongolia) 0'52"
- 4 A Patch of Willow Trees (Shanxi) 0'25"
- 5 A New Year Visit (Shaanxi) 0'26"
- 6 Picking Flowers (Sichuan) 0'24"
- 7 Little Cabbage (Hebei) 0'13"
- 8 Lan Huahua (Shaanxi) 0'24"
- 9 Thunder a Thousand Miles Away (Shaanxi) 0'45"
- 10 The Furry Gourd (Shanxi) 0'25"
- 11 Jasmine (Jiangsu) 0'52"
- 12 Jasmine (Hebei) 0'54"
- 13 Jasmine (published in 1804 by John Barrow) 0'45"
- 14 Labourers Have a Hard Time (Shaanxi) 0'28"
- 15 Small Planting, Huge Harvest (Jiangsu) 0'26"
- 16 Weeping Seven-Seven (Jiangsu) 0'29"
- 17 The Little Cowherd (Hebei) 0'32"
- 18 Jagged Mountain (Sichuan) 0'44"
- 19 Horse-Lantern Tune (Zhejiang) 0'27"
- 20 Wind Rustles the Bamboo Leaves (Fujian) 1'01"
- 21 Scenes of Wuxi (Jiangsu) 0'41"
- 22 The Embroidered Bag (Shanxi) 0'22"
- 23 Flower Lantern (Yunnan) 0'45"
- 24 Going West (Shanxi) 0'38"
- 25 A Gust of Wind Blew on the Day You Left
(Inner Mongolia) 0'22"
- 26 A Pair of Ducks and a Pair of Geese (Shaanxi) 1'05"
- 27 Xintianyou Medley (Shaanxi) 0'55"
- 28 Mountain Song of the Horseman (Yunnan) 0'36"
- 29 Women on Patrol (Shanxi) 0'36"
- 30 Yimeng Mountain Tune (Shandong) 0'23"
- 31 Thirty-Mile Village (Shaanxi) 0'50"
- 32 Bitter and Alone (Shanxi) 0'39"
- 33 Weeping at the Great Wall (Jiangsu) 0'30"
- 34 Flowing Stream (Yunnan) 1'09"
- 35 A Rainy Day (Guangdong) 1'32"

- 36 Hunting the Yellow Goat (Shaanxi) 0'29"
- 37 Mum, You are Really Confused (Liaoning) 0'35"
- 38 A Little Bird (Taiwan) 0'22"
- 39 Fengyang Flower Drum – 1 (Anhui) 0'58"
- 40 Fengyang Flower Drum – 2 (Anhui) 0'33"
- 41 Man Jiang Hong (Ancient song) 2'01"
- 42 Willows are New (Traditional song performed
by qin zither players) 1'18"
- 43 Taihang Mountains (Shanxi) 0'29"
- 44 Three Folk Songs (Shanxi and Shaanxi) 1'19"
- 45 Snatching at Butterflies while Tea-Picking
(Fujian) 0'28"
- 46 Tea-Picking (Zhejiang) 0'44"
- 47 Willows are Green (Jiangsu) 0'21"
- 48 Jiaocheng Mountain (Shanxi) 0'57"
- 49 Flower Riddle (Hebei) 0'30"
- 50 Song of the Yellow River Boatmen
(Shaanxi) 0'55"

15 EARLY PIANO PIECES by Julian Yu

- 51 Canon 0'52"
- 52 Counterpoint 0'40"
- 53 Mountain Village Scene 2'09"
- 54 Mountain Song 1'32"
- 55 Day and Night, Thinking of You 1'46"
- 56 Dance 1'04"
- 57 March Fair 1'16"
- 58 Theme and Variations 3'58"
- 59 The Little Wooden Boat 1'10"
- 60 Little Pine Tree Variations 1'51"
- 61 Mini Variations 1'51"
- 62 Sonatina 2'02"
- 63 Variations on "The Blossoms of Friendship" 1'43"
- 64 The Ping-Pong Match 1'57"
- 65 Variations on a Hebei Folk Song 1'43"

The first of the two collections on this CD, the 50 Chinese folk songs, consists of pieces arranged for piano in 2018 for an album to be released by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press. I would like to thank my pianist friend LIN Ke from Sydney for his wonderful playing, and Martin Wright of Move Records for his support and many years of productive collaboration.

Julian Yu, Melbourne, March 2019

50 CHINESE FOLK SONGS

In most cases the original melody has been kept intact, while the accompaniment often consists of quotations from well-known pieces of Western classical music.

1 **Flying the Kite** (Hebei)

This folk song has different names in different provinces, but the melodies are similar, as they all derive from the same basic melody. Flying the Kite describes the happy scene of several young girls flying a kite while on an outing in early spring.

2 **Gada Meilin** (Inner Mongolia)

The ground bass [basso continuo] accompaniment is taken from Handel's

cantata *Susanna*. This continuously repeated chromatically descending bassline gives the piece a melancholic feeling which contrasts with the theme of Mongolia's national hero, Gada Meilin.

3 **The Little Lover** (Inner Mongolia)

The Mongolian characteristics of this lyrical love song can be heard clearly in the last five notes.



4 **A Patch of Willow Trees** (Shanxi)

Also known as *The Land is Returned to its Original Owners*, this tune expresses the happiness of peasants who have been liberated and given their own patch of land. As is the case with many Chinese folk songs, the lyrics have been added later.

5 **A New Year Visit** (Shaanxi)

Also known as “Da Lian Cheng”, this humorous and witty melody is reputed to have come from a folk tune used in Inner Mongolian *er ren tai* balladry.

6 **Picking Flowers** (Sichuan)

Originating from the Nanping area of Sichuan Province, this short melody is accompanied by a quotation from J.S. Bach’s *Mass in B minor*.

7 **Little Cabbage** (Hebei)

This traditional ballad describes the heartbroken feelings of an ill-treated little orphan girl known as “Little Cabbage”, who misses her dead mother dreadfully. The accompaniment consists of the seven notes C-A-B-B-A-G-E, which are played in counterpoint with the song.

8 **Lan Huahua** (Shaanxi)

This mountain song is a traditional *xintianyou* (a song consisting of lead-answer phrases repeated many times over). The song tells the well-known story of a beautiful girl called Lan Huahua who rebels against the feudal tradition of arranged marriage. Near the end of the



accompaniment you can hear a chordal progression taken from the *passacaglia* theme from the fourth movement of the Fourth Symphony of Johannes Brahms.

9 **Thunder a Thousand Miles Away** (Shaanxi)

The undulating melody is full of twists and jumps of octave, seventh and sixth intervals, all of which can be heard in the first three bars. These big jumps are a feature rarely seen in the folk songs of other provinces.

10 **The Furry Gourd** (Shanxi)

This traditional mountain song from the HeQu region in the northwest of Shanxi Province expresses the feelings of love and adoration that young lovers have for each other. The accompaniment comes from the theme of J.S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.

11 **Jasmine** (Jiangsu version)

This elegant, fluid melody, increasingly popular during the last two centuries, is widely considered to be the “number one folk song” from the Jiangnan region.

12 **Jasmine** (Hebei version)

Originally the “number one folk song” of the Jiangnan region, *Jasmine* has now evolved into many variants in different provinces and geographical areas. This version is from Hebei Province. From the melodic contours, we can see that it still bears a relationship to the Jiangnan version even though it is already “northernised” (for example, an extended phrase has been added just before the end, purportedly taken from Lü opera).

13 **Jasmine** (version of John Barrow)

Jasmine was the first Chinese folk song to become widely known abroad, ever since it was included in a book published in 1804 by John Barrow, Secretary to the English ambassador to China. Puccini subsequently wooed audiences far and wide with this song in his opera *Turandot*.



14 Labourers Have a Hard Time (Shaanxi)

This song from northern Shaanxi Province was sung by labourers bemoaning their hard life. The bassline is a quotation from J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

15 Small Planting, Huge Harvest (Jiangsu)

This mountain song comes from the Gaochun region of Jiangsu Province. Its most striking characteristic is its use of the less common *jiao* mode, in which each phrase ends on the *third* note of the scale. Once again, the bassline in the accompaniment is a quotation from J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

16 Weeping Seven-Seven (Jiangsu)

The title of this folk song refers to a traditional custom, prevalent in the countryside of the Jiangnan region, of mourning the dead and sending off their departing spirits. The whole process consists of seven stages each of which lasts for seven days. In the song, the widow mourns her dead husband and bemoans her fate. This same melody also appeared in the 1937 Chinese film *Street Angel* under the title "Song of the Four Seasons".

The ground bass is taken from the famous 13th century European Latin Catholic hymn "Dies Irae" (or "*Day of Wrath*"). It symbolises fear and death, and is often

used to mourn the dead. Many composers used this melody in their compositions, including Berlioz, Liszt, Saint-Saens, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky and Britten.

17 The Little Cowherd (Hebei)

This is a children's folk song from Hebei Province. The bassline is an adaptation from the bassline of J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

18 Jagged Mountain (Sichuan)

The passacaglia-like ground bass is taken from J.S. Bach's *Mass in B Minor*.



24 **Going West** (Shanxi)

Due to the paucity of the soil in the north-west of Shanxi Province, labourers from this region traditionally joined with their mates and left their homes every spring to look for work in the vast lands to the west of Zhangjiakou in order to support their families, returning only during the idle winter months. This folk song is one of many from this area describing the long

days of labour that these men endured, their pain of parting, and their longing for home.

25 **A Gust of Wind Blew on the Day You Left** (Inner Mongolia)

This simple folk song is only eight bars long. The second time around a 'gust of wind' can be heard in the accompaniment.

19 **Horse-Lantern Tune** (Zhejiang)

In this popular folk song from Zhejiang Province, the lower part is an enlarged free imitation of the upper part.

20 **Wind Rustles the Bamboo Leaves** (Fujian)

This short four-bar folk song is repeated three times. The accompaniment uses parallel triads.

21 **Scenes of Wuxi** (Jiangsu)

This fluid folk song from Jiangsu Province with its smooth, winding contours is in the traditional Jiangnan musical style.

22 **The Embroidered Bag** (Shanxi)

This is a typical Shanxi melody characterised by perfect fourth and fifth intervals.

23 **Flower Lantern** (Yunnan)

The lower part is a simple imitation of the upper part for the first 15 bars, after which it is turned upside down.



26 **A Pair of Ducks and a Pair of Geese**

(Shaanxi)

This short piece is a combination of two *xintianyou* folk songs reflecting the vast open spaces of the Shaanxi plateaus. The first of these songs bears the above title, while the second is called “The Wife Falls on Hard Times”. The ground bass in the left hand is taken from Pachelbel’s famous *Canon*.



27 **Xintianyou Medley** (Shaanxi)

A continuous repetition of the first eight bass notes from J.S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* forms an accompaniment for two *xintianyou* folk songs: “Suffering People Long for Better Times” and “The Guerillas Come Down from the Hengshan Ranges”.

28 **Mountain Song of the Horseman**

(Yunnan)

This Han nationality mountain song from Yunnan Province was notated in the 1940s and popularized throughout China in the 1950s by folk soprano HUANG Hong.

29 **Women on Patrol** (Shanxi)

The melodic line of this song has a strong Shanxi flavour.

30 **Yimeng Mountain Tune** (Shandong)

This song, also known as “Yimeng Mountain Scenery”, is sung in the Linyi region of Shandong Province. Originating in the 1940s from a traditional folk song called “The Twelve Months of the [Lunar] Year”, it became well known as a representative Shandong folk song after new lyrics were added.

31 **Thirty-Mile Village** (Shaanxi)

This popular folk song from the Sui De region of Shaanxi Province was notated in the 1940s by composer HUANG Zhun.

32 **Bitter and Alone** (Shanxi)

As the title suggests, this folk song from Shanxi Province is full of bitterness and sadness. The simple melody and its

accompaniment combine to produce a texture like that of a string quartet.

33 **Weeping at the Great Wall** (Jiangsu)

This song tells the sad ancient story of Meng Jiang Nü, the wife of a peasant labourer called WAN Xiliang who was sent to help build the Great Wall of China. Missing her husband dreadfully, she travels thousands of miles searching for him and dies at the foot of the Great Wall. The ground bass accompaniment is taken from J.S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.

34 **Flowing Stream** (Yunnan)

In the accompaniment of this mountain song from Yunnan Province, you can hear the sound of a murmuring stream.



35 **A Rainy Day** (Guangdong)

This is a Hakka mountain song from the Shaoguan Qujiang district in Guangdong Province. Right at the beginning is a quotation [chordal progression] from the *passacaglia* theme from the fourth movement of the fourth symphony of Johannes Brahms. The treble part of this is then moved to the bass, where it is repeated twice, while above it, the melody of “A Rainy Day” appears twice.

36 **Hunting the Yellow Goat** (Shaanxi)

This folk song was later reworded and the title was changed to “Song and Dance for the Army”. Near the end, the second half of the theme from J.S. Bach’s *A Musical Offering* appears in the bass.

37 **Mum, You are Really Confused** (Liaoning)

In this song from Haicheng in Liaoning Province, a daughter chides her mother for not understanding that she is already grown up and longing to find a life partner.

38 **A Little Bird** (Taiwan)

This nursery rhyme from Taiwan has a naïve, cheerful melody. In the left hand, the repeated four-note phrase C-A-G-E symbolises a cage from which the bird cannot escape, clashing with the right-hand melody which is in the key of E flat.

39 **Fengyang Flower Drum (1)** (Anhui)

This song comes from Fengyang County in Anhui Province, and is also known as



“Song of Fengyang”. There are various theories about its origin. Probably it came from the folk dance “Beating the Flower Drum”. Historically the Huai River in Anhui Province would often flood, and residents would flee their homes and beg for food. They would carry a flower drum and beat it while dancing and singing to attract alms.

40 **Fengyang Flower Drum (2)** (Anhui)

This is another version of the previous folk song. Four neat phrases are followed by a supplementary phrase and a string of nonsense words.

41 **Man Jiang Hong** (Ancient song)

This is one of the well-known tunes to which a ci poem can be composed, as it has the right rhythm and number of syllables. In 1925 the musicologist YANG Yinliu coupled it with the patriotic ci poem “Man Jiang Hong” by YUE Fei [1103-1142 AD], and the resultant song became popular throughout China.

42 **Willows are New** (Traditional song performed by qin zither players)

This is one of many qin ge melodies traditionally performed by qin zither players who sing while playing. The lyrics, from a poem by Tang Dynasty poet WANG Wei (699-759 AD), contain the line “There are no friends outside the Western Pass”. In this arrangement, the accompanying contrapuntal part consists of several motifs from some of J.S. Bach’s most famous pieces. When combined with the melody, they give a melancholic feeling to the song.

43 **Taihang Mountains** (Shanxi)

The melody, originally in 2/4 time, has been changed to 3/4 time in order to fit in with the left-hand part, which is taken from J.S. Bach’s accompaniment to his *Goldberg Variations*.

44 **Three Folk Songs** (Shanxi and Shaanxi)

This medley of three folk songs from Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces is accompanied by harmonies from the first symphony of Johannes Brahms. The folk songs are: “The Furry Gourd” (Shanxi), “When Brother Returned from the Red Army” (Shaanxi), and “Guerillas Descend from the Hengshan Mountains” (Shaanxi).

45 **Snatching at Butterflies while Tea-Picking** (Fujian)

This is a traditional folk song and dance from Longyan District in Fujian Province. It is also known as “The Tea-Picking Lantern”.



15 EARLY PIANO PIECES

This collection consists of pieces written in the 1970s while I was still studying composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and revised in 2005. Some of these are arrangements of well-known Chinese songs, while others are original compositions.

51 **Canon**

A short study in counterpoint in the form of a canon.

52 **Counterpoint**

An exercise in combining non-imitative contrasting melodies.

53 **Mountain Village Scene**

A pentatonic piece like an “invention”. This piece was published in the Australian Music Examinations Board 2018 Grade 4 piano album.

54 **Mountain Song**

A two-part invention based on an original melody in the style of a Chinese folk song from the Jiangnan region.

55 **Day and Night, Thinking of You**

A song written in 1977 in memory of Premier Zhou Enlai.

46 **Tea-Picking** (Zhejiang)

This tune comes from a folk dance called “Tea Lantern Tune”. The song is sung forwards and then backwards, that is, from January to December and then back again.

47 **Willows are Green** (Jiangsu)

This folk tune comes from Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province. In the song, the words “Willows are green” are repeated many times without any meaning at all, hence the name. The modern western technique of pointillism can be heard throughout the piece.

48 **Jiaocheng Mountain** (Shanxi)

This is a typical Shanxi style folk song. Here the melody is played twice with

a contrapuntal accompaniment. First it appears as a canon at the fifth, while the second time it is combined with excerpts from the eighth piece of J.S. Bach’s *Inventions for Two Voices*.

49 **Flower Riddle** (Hebei)

The flower riddle, a popular type of “question-answer” song, quizzes the opponent about the names of flowers.

50 **Song of the Yellow River Boatmen** (Shaanxi)

In about 1942, folksong collectors visited the shores of the Yellow River at the border between Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces and notated this song sung by a boatman.



56 **Dance**

A dance in Tibetan folk style.

57 **March Fair**

Based on a folk song of the Bai nationality of Yunnan Province, this piece describes a country fair.

58 **Theme and Variations**

Based on the theme by WANG Ming from the film *Hai Xia*. Each of the six variations describes a different scene in the film.

59 **The Little Wooden Boat**

The piano version of an original song with lyrics about a little wooden boat.

60 **Little Pine Tree Variations**

The theme is taken from a popular children's song from the 1960s film *Lei Feng*. The lyrics run: "Little pine tree, grow up quickly! Sprout green leaves and new shoots! The warm sun bathes us. Grow up quickly! Grow up quickly!"



61 **Mini Variations**

Five variations on an original theme.

62 **Sonatina**

A study in Sonata form. The themes are taken from three Chinese nursery rhymes from my childhood in China: "Seeking Friends" and a contrasting second theme (the title of which I can't remember) in the Exposition section, and "Dropping the Handkerchief" in the Development section.



In the Recapitulation, the first two themes are blended together in the same key.

63 **Variations on "The Blossoms of Friendship"**

This piece is based on the theme of a Chinese children's song, "The Blossoms of Friendship", popular in the early 1970s.

64 **The Ping-Pong Match**

The theme comes from the song "The Little Ball Flashes and Twinkles" by QIAN Huitang, popular in the early 1970s. The subtitles are taken from the lyrics of this song.

65 **Variations on a Hebei Folk Song**

This piece, completed in 2005, is based on the unfinished manuscript of a piano piece from my student days which was based on a folk song from Hebei Province.



China is one of the oldest countries in the world, covering an area close to 9.6 million square kilometres and comprising at least 56 ethnic groups. As a result, Chinese folk songs, which date back thousands of years, are extremely diverse and have evolved significantly over time.

The present CD brings together 50 most well-known Chinese folk songs in a unique arrangement for piano solo by Julian Yu. While these arrangements are very short with some pieces lasting no more than 30 seconds, they were created with the utmost attention to detail. For example, a number of folk songs have been harmonised pleasantly using western harmonic progressions from works of

Bach and Brahms. However, this has been achieved without sacrificing the authentic character of the folk songs.

One of my favourite pieces from the 50 folk songs is No. 34, “Flowing Stream”, originally a song from Yunnan Province. Although this piece is based on only one chord from beginning to end, it captures the breathtaking beauty of southern China perfectly.

The Early Piano Pieces (1974-77) were composed by Julian in his early 20s during the final years of the Cultural Revolution. While the musical language is very conservative (as more radical compositional techniques were not permitted at the time), Julian’s distinctive

sense of humour can still be found here. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the piece, No. 64, “The Ping-Pong Match”, where contrapuntal techniques have been adopted to depict two Ping-Pong players. As the match intensifies, the music approaches hair-raising speed!

Lastly, I want to thank Julian for involving me in this wonderful project. I have enjoyed playing the music on this CD immensely not only because these are beautiful pieces but also because they brought back many fond memories of my childhood in China.

Ke Lin, Sydney, March 2019

Ke Lin

Ke Lin was born in Shanghai and started learning the piano at age 3. However, his interest in playing piano only began at age 12 after hearing a recording of Chopin's Fantaisie-Impromptu. He completed his study in music with Glenn Riddle at the University of Melbourne.

Ke has received numerous prizes and scholarships, including the MBS National Young Performer of the Year, The John Allison & Sydney Eisteddfod Piano Scholarship (City of Sydney John Allison Scholarship) and the Costa National Music Prize. Ke has given many performances including at the Port Fairy Festival, the Tyalgum Festival, the Brisbane Kawai Keyboard Series and the Piano Landmarks Concert Series. He has also performed overseas in England, Germany, China, Taiwan and USA. Recently, Ke was invited to perform at the



Ke Lin with composer Julian Yu

International Summer Music Festival in Shanghai and the National Centre for the Performance Arts in Beijing. The concert in Beijing also featured the first performance of the Clarinet Concerto on Chinese Themes composed by Dr Julian Yu (arranged for piano by Ke) with the New Goldberg Orchestra.

Julian Yu

Born in Beijing in 1957, Julian Yu settled in Australia in 1985. He studied composition at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, later joining the teaching staff there, and from 1980 to 1982 studied at the Tokyo College of Music with Joji Yuasa and Shin-ichiro Ikebe. In 1988 he was a Composition Fellow at Tanglewood where he studied with

Hans Werner Henze and Oliver Knussen. He has won many awards for composition including the 1988 Koussevitzky Tanglewood Composition Prize, and the inaugural and consecutive Paul Lowin Orchestral Prizes of 1991 and 1994. His work, mostly for orchestra, is frequently performed in Australia and internationally. A free-lance composer, he is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Melbourne.



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Composer: **Julian Yu**

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