



Franz Schubert



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart



Ludwig van Beethoven



Richard Wagner



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

JULIAN
YU



Frédéric Chopin



Johann Sebastian Bach

CUTETUDES

and other piano works

KE LIN piano



composed by
JULIAN YU
piano **KE LIN**

CUTE T U D E S

CUTETUDES

- 1** Condensed Prelude 0'51"
- 2** Two Swans Under Two Moons 2'38"
- 3** Compound Tragedy 2'32"
- 4** A Phone Call to Mozart 0'38"
- 5** What for Elise? 2'26"
- 6** Finished Symphony 1'19"
- 7** Czernissimo 1'06"
- 8** Why are Butterflies Sad? 1'48"
- 9** Folk Tune on Bach 0'45"
- 10** Interrupted Symphony 1'26"
- 11** Dovetailed Interlude 1'04"
- 12** Oriental Canon 2'49"
- 13** On Wings of Stars 1'11"
- 14** Harmonic Phrases at an Exhibition 3'12"
- 15** God Save Hanon 0'43"
- 16** Hanonica 0'46"
- 17** Paganini and the Hundred Birds 1'11"

- 18** Rondo alla Twinka 1'15"
- 19** Caterpoint 0'48"
- 20** To Comrade Shostakovich 2'14"
- 21** IMPROMPTU 3'37"
- 22** CHINA RHAPSODY 10'09"
- 23** THE HAPPY COUPLE RETURNS HOME 3'32"

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

composed by Modest Mussorgsky

Oriental version arr. Julian Yu (excerpts)

- 24** Promenade 1'52"
- 25** The Great Gate 6'23"
- 26** MUSIC FOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (1950)
composed by Yasushi Akutagawa,
arr. Julian Yu 5'08"

CUTETUDES

Condensed Prelude

The Prelude in C Major from the first book of J.S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier: 48 Preludes and Fugues* has been condensed and ornamented, using chords a semitone above and below. Bach's original bass line is buried underneath.

Two Swans Under Two Moons

The swans of Tchaikovsky and Saint-Saëns bask in the moonlight of Beethoven and Debussy.

Compound Tragedy

What could be more tragic than a meeting between Tristan, Isolde, Romeo, Juliet and the Butterfly Lovers?

A Phone Call to Mozart

A notorious ringtone interrupts Mozart while he is trying to compose his *Piano Sonata in A Major*.

What for Elise?

The familiar wrapping paper contains unexpected presents from far and wide.

Finished Symphony

Some composers have difficulty finishing their symphonies, and an old scratched LP that catches the stylus doesn't help. Despite numerous difficulties, Franz Schubert's *8th Symphony* finally comes to a satisfying conclusion with assistance from several famous composers.

Czernissimo

A kaleidoscope of brilliant, colourful ideas from Czerny's piano études. Who said Czerny's music was boring, repetitive and mechanical?

Why are Butterflies Sad?

Schumann's "Why?", Grieg's "Butterfly" and Beethoven's "Pathétique" Sonata, when combined, leave us with this perplexing question.

Folk Tune on Bach

A Cantonese-style melody in the right hand is accompanied in the left hand by a condensed version of J.S. Bach's Prelude in E Minor from Book I of his *48 Preludes and Fugues*.

Interrupted Symphony

An unfortunate pianist, while trying to play Brahms' *Symphony No. 1*, is interrupted by the telephone, an ambulance siren, and a banging on the door which turns ominously into Beethoven's "Fate" motif from his fifth symphony.

Dovetailed Interlude

An interesting way of composing is to dovetail two different pieces together note by note to create a new piece. The two original pieces here are J.S. Bach's Suites for cello in G major and E flat major.

Oriental Canon

The melody from Pachelbel's "Canon" as it might be played on the *koto* or Chinese zither. Near the end it is hijacked by a well-known tune from South China.

On Wings of Stars

A variation on "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star", with apologies to Mendelssohn.

Harmonic Phrases at an Exhibition

Mussorgsky's exhibition has been extended to include harmonic phrases from Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Chopin and others.

God Save Hanon

God will probably have saved the Queen by now, but do you think Hanon has a chance? (Right hand: National Anthem of the United Kingdom; Left hand: the famous Lesson I from *The Virtuoso Pianist* by Charles-Louis Hanon).

Hanonica

Now that he has been saved, a jazzy, jubilant Hanon cavorts with Bach and Saint-Saëns. (Right hand: theme from "The Swan" from Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals*, ending with J.S. Bach's theme from his *Prelude in C minor*; Left hand: the famous Lesson I from *The Virtuoso Pianist* by Charles-Louis Hanon).

Paganini and the Hundred Birds

Paganini's famous theme (bars 1-8) morphs naturally into the Chinese melody "A Hundred Birds Adore the Phoenix" (*Bainiao chao feng*), after which the two combine. Paganini would be happy!

Rondo alla Twinka

A variation on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", with apologies to Mozart.

Caterpoint

Prokofiev's cat from *Peter and the Wolf* dances to a counter-melody.

To Comrade Shostakovich

An appreciation of his lighter side. The theme comes from a children's song from his cantata *Song of the Forest*.

IMPROMPTU

The impulse to write *Impromptu* came in 1981, when someone overheard me improvising on the piano, knocked on the door and asked me who had composed the piece and if he could borrow the music. Luckily I had made a recording, but it took me several years of listening to those musical ramblings before I finally worked out a pattern with which to notate them and construct an integral piece. From then on, I used this pattern/style again and again in many subsequent compositions until it became part of my musical language.

The piece is minimalist, humorous, bright, high-pitched to the point of being almost strident, and percussive. If you use your imagination, perhaps you can hear the small high-pitched gongs, cymbals, fiddles etc. of Chinese folk music.

CHINA RHAPSODY

This piece was commissioned by my friend and erstwhile fellow student at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, pianist Jiangang WU, who performed it at his celebration concert at the Sydney Opera House on 6 May 2012. Although it takes the form of a western rhapsody, its musical content is exclusively Chinese. Numerous quotations from traditional songs and instrumental music, blended into one artistic entity, tell of a series of Chinese heroes from ancient times.

THE HAPPY COUPLE RETURNS HOME

This piece is based on a famous aria from Chinese Huangmei opera (Anhui Province). The story tells of an immortal girl who falls in love with a young man and comes down to earth to marry him. Although the piece is composed solely of arpeggios and there is no linear melody, you can still hear the theme quite clearly if you are familiar with it.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Modest Mussorgsky,
arr. Julian Yu
(Oriental version excerpts)

Promenade The Great Gate

I made this arrangement at the request of pianist YE Sisi, who performed it at her graduation recital at the Academy of the Performing Arts in Hong Kong in July 2007. Many arrangements of *Pictures at an Exhibition* exist for orchestra and various instrumental combinations; however, there are hardly any arrangements for solo piano (for which the piece was originally written). This version is quite unique, with its Chinese-style embellishments and imitations of Chinese zither sounds.

MUSIC FOR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (1950)

Yasushi Akutagawa (1925-1989), arr. Julian Yu

I first heard this piece in 1980 while studying in Japan, and was immediately drawn to it. This arrangement is of the rondo-like second movement, marked *Allegro*. An urgently aggressive principal theme gives way to a scherzo-like contrasting episode and a second, lyrical episode, both making use of the characteristic interval of a minor second, typical of the composer. The influences of Shostakovich and Prokofiev can be heard clearly throughout. I am very grateful to Mrs Akutagawa for granting permission for this piano arrangement.

Julian Yu writes:

I first met Ke Lin in 2012. He was the pianist accompanying a Chinese cultural school orchestra on their tour to China, and in those concerts he performed my piano pieces *China Rhapsody* and *Impromptu* brilliantly. His friendly nature, immense talent and generous appreciation of my music ensured that we became good friends. His innate musical understanding, passion, dedication, enthusiasm and virtuosity all indicated that he should be a successful concert pianist, so I was amazed to discover that he has a very demanding day job (as an actuary) and practices the piano after hours while also caring for his family. He is a man of remarkable gifts.

Two years after his first child, Lia, was born, Ke commissioned me to write a set of piano pieces for her to learn when she was a little older. The result was the *Cutetudes* ('cute' + 'études'), a set of classically-related, humorous pieces. After that, I sent him a few of my other pieces for piano, and the idea for this CD was born.

Ke Lin writes:

As an actuary working in the life insurance industry, I appreciate the importance of luck in our everyday life, and luck is exactly what got me involved in this project with Dr Julian Yu, whose music I deeply love.

Many years ago, I bought an interesting album called *For Children* on the MDG label which comprised piano music composed by a number of leading contemporary composers including Kurtag and Gubaidulina. I was hoping to introduce these pieces to my daughter Lia to raise her interest in piano music from an early age. Unfortunately, this idea was quickly abandoned after I listened to the album myself. The music sounded far too complex and dissonant for a young child!

About a year later, I was invited to perform Julian's virtuoso tour de force *China Rhapsody* at the 20th anniversary concert for the Xin Jin Shan Chinese Cultural School. At the same concert, the New Goldberg Orchestra (NGO), which is comprised of students of the Chinese school, also performed Julian's *Xin Jin Shan Symphonic Poem*, commissioned specifically for this event. I immediately fell in love with this extraordinary work, especially the children's chorus which brought back many fond memories of my childhood. Julian later revealed to me that the chorus section was actually based on a very popular school song that I knew when I was young. However, the melody has been intentionally turned upside down to disguise its origin.

After the success of this concert, Julian and the NGO were invited to perform at the Shanghai International Summer Music Festival. I was fortunate enough to join the orchestra on this trip, pretending to be a harpist. As there were insufficient items on the program for the orchestra, I also got the opportunity to perform a number of solo piano pieces including an early work by Julian called *Impromptu*.

Impromptu is a highly sophisticated work published by Universal Edition in Austria, one of the most important publishers of contemporary classical music. The style of this

work couldn't be more different from the *Symphonic Poem* or *China Rhapsody*; it is full of dissonances and irregular rhythms! Not surprisingly, it reminded me of the album *For Children*. As Julian could write music in a diverse range of styles, I secretly hoped that he could one day compose some simple piano works that were both contemporary in style and, at the same time, accessible to children. The only problem was that I did not know how to ask him.

The China trip gave me the perfect opportunity to share my idea with Julian and, to my astonishment, he was very enthusiastic about it. He started working on it immediately. The original plan was to compose 10 pieces, but inspiration kept coming to him so that he ended up composing 20 pieces altogether! The title *Cutetudes* was Julian's idea and it is a portmanteau, blending the English word 'cute' with the French word 'étude', which means study.

I can't thank Julian enough for these wonderful creations. They are little gems, and I enjoy playing them immensely. Lia, who is now six and half years old, has also started to learn piano. She really enjoys hearing me practicing these pieces every morning before I go to work, and her favourite piece from *Cutetudes* is called "Two Swans under Two Moons".

Ke Lin, May 2017

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-Improptu*. 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 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.



Ke Lin with composer Julian Yu