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***Modern Chinese Teaching Piano Pieces:
A Multimedia Lecture Recital***

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Abstract

In this multimedia lecture recital, a selection of modern Chinese teaching piano pieces ranging from early intermediate to advanced levels are introduced and performed. Composed and arranged by internationally renowned living composers, these pieces have their roots in music from various regions of China. Program notes and pedagogical issues are discussed, and artworks or scenery pertaining to the music are displayed as Powerpoint slides during the performance.

The early intermediate level piece in this selection is a simple and charming arrangement of a beautiful folksong entitled “Jasmine Flower” from Jiangsu Province (southeast). It serves as a fine introduction to Chinese music and the pentatonic scale. Arranged by American composer Joseph Johnson, it is taken from the *Chinese Folk Songs Collection* published by Hal Leonard in 2009.

The intermediate level pieces consist of two imaginative works taken from *Melodies of China*, a collection of twenty arrangements of Chinese Folk Songs by Zhang Zhao, a professor of composition at Minzu University in Beijing, and published by Schott Music in 2009. Entitled “See a Babbling Brook” and “Jingpo Folk Song” these colorful works have their roots from Yunnan Province (southwest), and use singing style, dance, a broad keyboard range, accidentals in the notation, and a wide range of tempo.

Two early advanced pieces are selected from internationally renowned composer Tan Dun’s *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, which was composed in 1978-79 and published by G. Schirmer, Inc. The works are based on folksongs from Hunan Province (southeast), where Tan was born and raised. These lyrical, playful and dance-like pieces explore the use of trills, singing style, free notation without meter, a wide range of tempo, and extreme dynamic ranges.

The advanced piece in this presentation is the first work from award-winning composer Chen Yi’s *Two Chinese Bagatelles: Piano Solo for Children*, which were composed in 1984 and 1993 respectively and published by Theodore Presser Company. Expressing elements of opera from Henan Province in northern China, this lively and dramatic piece imitate

operatic singing and instruments, and exhibit the use of ornaments, changing meter, counterpoint, and rhythmic complexity.

Through this multimedia lecture recital, the presenter hopes that such interesting and lesser-known modern Chinese repertoire would be introduced and disseminated more widely around the world, and that teachers would benefit from the experience and gain a wider collection of repertoire for their students. Such projects would also help to promote further understanding and appreciation among our various cultures, and help the world to move towards being a smaller and more beautiful place.

Although the music itself is undoubtedly complete and does not need to be enhanced in any way, the presenter hopes that such multimedia presentations could enrich the aesthetic experience of the audience, who may be inspired to contemplate on the extra-musical ideas that the composers possibly had in mind when writing the pieces. The presenter chose works of art that closely match the character and title of each piece of music.

From a pedagogical perspective, the presenter hopes that the experience would present another angle of approaching the music that would stimulate the imagination, connect the visual and aural senses, and provide some alternative ideas for students to interpret the music.

Recording

The presenter's recording of Tan Dun's *Eight Memories in Watercolor* and other works by major contemporary Chinese composers was released by Naxos in 2015. The title of the CD is *Echoes of China: Contemporary Piano Music*:

http://www.naxos.com/catalogue/item.asp?item_code=8.570616

Scores

* *Chinese Folk Songs Collection: 24 Traditional Folk Songs for Intermediate Level Piano Solo* (2009)

Joseph Johnson

Hal Leonard Corporation, USA

* *Melodies of China* (2009)

Zhang Zhao (b. 1964)

People's Music Publishing House, Beijing; Europe and USA Schott Music

• *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, Op. 1 (1978-9)

Tan Dun (b. 1957)

G. Schirmer, Inc., USA

* *Two Chinese Bagatelles: Piano Solo for Children* (2000)

Chen Yi (b. 1953)

Theodore Presser Company, USA