

**NAXOS**

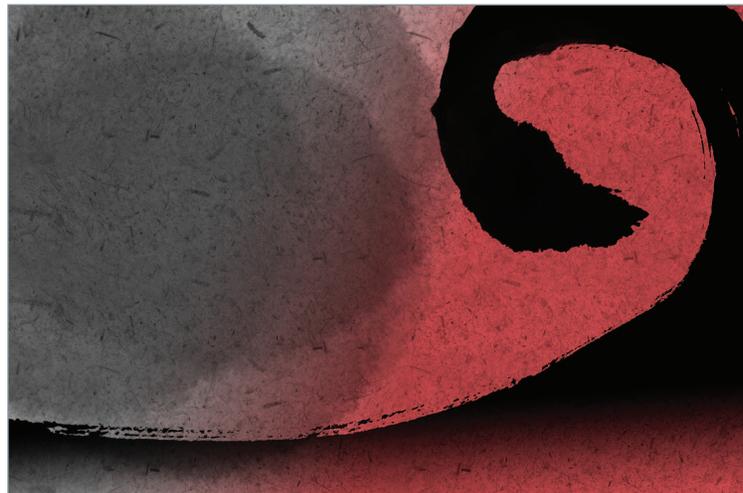
# **TAN DUN**

## **Concerto for Orchestra**

**Symphonic Poem on Three Notes • Orchestral Theatre**

**Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Tan Dun**



## Tan Dun

### Symphonic Poem on Three Notes • Orchestral Theatre • Concerto for Orchestra

When I was a child, growing up in the countryside of China's Hunan province, the villagers, local band members and the village Shaman would always sing and play together. They combined their voices with the sounds of nature, such as water, stones and leaves. Their music was a blending of colours linking together ritual operatic performance and people chanting. The three pieces recorded here are all related to those distant musical memories of mine. In those memories, the sounds were never divided between the instruments and the sounds of nature – in my ear they were one. The pieces that you listen to here are firmly rooted in a traditional orchestral sound, but contain an interplay between experimental and ritualistic vocalizations and integrate the natural sounds of stones, air and leaves. This is where my experimental ideas meet the mystery of the rituals and village opera of my childhood, and where the industrial sounds of today meet my early countryside memories... I want to have avant-garde sonorities and outrageous music imageries meet my sonic philosophy and melt into the rice fields of my memory.

#### Symphonic Poem on Three Notes (2012)

One day I received a phone call from the Teatro Real Opera in Madrid. They were planning a surprise seventieth birthday celebration for Plácido Domingo and called to ask whether I could write a work for the occasion. Instantly I said yes! Since working with Plácido on my opera *The First Emperor*, he has truly become one of my dear friends. When first imagining the piece, I thought it very celebratory to use Plácido's name as part of the music – when you rap his name "Plácido" it sounds like LA SI DO. I used the notes LA SI DO/A-B-C to form the musical theme of this symphonic poem. The beginning of the piece echoes the start of new life and, like a dream, it unfolds with the sounds of birds, incense, wind and rain – the tubular chimes start to sing and LA SI DO appears for the first time. This theme then unfolds in a variety of textures:

symphonic rapping, instrumental and vocal hip-hop, blowing sounds and stones. Through the course of the piece, the industrial brake drums and car wheel sounds join in representing nature and life growing and evolving into cities and societies. The climax erupts with the rapping and shouting of PLA CI DO and subsides with chanting and foot stamping as these three notes return back to nature, back to the origin and back to the future. Fortunately in the end, I had help from the Audi Summer Festival in Shanghai to finish the piece and I called it *Symphonic Poem on Three Notes* in celebration of my friend Plá-ci-do.

#### Orchestral Theatre (1990)

*Orchestral Theatre* was originally commissioned by the BBC Scottish Symphony with a *xun* solo, however the version here is for orchestra only. The piece is centred on ritual and my memories of ritual from my childhood. In the Hunan countryside, the local ritual activities combined playing and vocalizing together – praying to the ancestors and creating a ritualistic drama. The drama is led by the village shaman; he teases life and becomes a bridge between the last life and the next. Shamans believe that everything in nature has its own life and that they can talk to nature just as nature talks to itself. For example, a stone can talk to water and birds can talk to leaves. This is the meaning of shamanistic culture in Hunan and *Orchestral Theatre* is written with these memories in mind. When I wrote this piece I was very interested in twelve-tone and atonal music, however I was not satisfied with its boundaries. I wanted to bring in folk-music styles, its rhythmic traditions and dramatic memories, which is the opposite of the twelve-tone tradition. At the beginning of *Orchestral Theatre*, you can immediately feel the atonal sounds in a very primitive space. The piccolo sounds like a thousand-year-old bone flute and as the orchestra gets louder, you hear the ancient war cries for life and love. Throughout the piece I have placed a "voice stamp" of mine

– "Hei Zo Hei". These words have no meaning, but the words are not empty. They represent my belief that music can be everything and anything – dream, ritual, life...

#### Concerto for Orchestra (2012)

An orchestra in a composer's hands no longer remains a standard orchestra – it becomes the orchestra of that specific composer. The same instrumentation in the hands of Bartók or Stravinsky or Debussy becomes a completely different orchestra. I have always asked myself: what is my orchestra? What is the orchestra of the future? This piece, *Concerto for Orchestra*, is my answer. It evolved from a concerto of mine commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic and was written with my opera *Marco Polo* in mind. Marco Polo took three different journeys: a geographical, musical and spiritual journey. In the first movement *Light of Timespace*, Marco Polo is making his spiritual journey through time and space. The brass and strings slide back

and forth, much like the fading in and out of light or the dripping of ink on calligraphy paper. The sound stops, but the meaning of the notes still continues. The second movement, *Scent of Bazaar*, opens to the aroma of Eastern markets with the trumpets and brass representing the spicy flavours and powerful perfumes. With the third movement, *The Raga of Desert*, we hear Indian raga where every note is alive and has an infinite number of expressions. Here, I specifically focused on the blowing and bowing instruments and how they could sound like plucking instruments such as the sitar. For the final movement, Marco Polo makes his arrival in the Forbidden City and I was trying to imagine what kind of light, colour and sound he saw and heard there. The Forbidden City also has a lot of meaning for me: it is not "forbidden", not an obstruction, but shows origin, change and mystery. Change is circular and we must always return.

Tan Dun

### Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra Music Director: Jaap van Zweden



The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra is one of Asia's leading orchestras. Enriching Hong Kong's cultural life for over a century, the Orchestra has grown into a world-class ensemble of 90 players drawn from both China and overseas, performing under the artistic leadership of renowned conductors. Jaap van Zweden is its current Music Director, having succeeded Edo de Waart who held the position from 2004 to 2012. Inviting artists of the highest international calibre to perform alongside it during its annual season of over 150 performances, the Orchestra touches the lives of over 200,000 music lovers. It is actively involved in promoting music through an extensive and varied educational programme, popular outreach concerts as well as regular broadcasts and telecasts. As Hong Kong's flagship orchestra, the Orchestra has undertaken successful tours of Europe, Asia and North America, and maintains a regular presence on Mainland China. It has also recorded extensively, specializing in Chinese and contemporary compositions including works by Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, Kurt Weill and Stravinsky.

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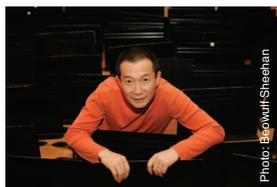


Photo: Bbowwiff Sheehan

The conceptual and multifaceted composer/conductor Tan Dun has made an indelible mark on the world's music scene with a creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. He is a recipient of today's most prestigious honours including the GRAMMY® Award, Academy Award, Grawemeyer



Photo: Chris Lee

Award for classical composition, Musical America's *Composer of The Year*, Shostakovich Award and the Bach Prize of Hamburg, and his music has been played throughout the world by leading orchestras, opera houses, international festivals, and on radio and television. As a conductor, Tan Dun has led the world's most renowned orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala and the Münchner Philharmoniker, among others. In 2010, he served as *Cultural Ambassador to the World* for World EXPO 2010 Shanghai.

Tan Dun's individual voice has been heard widely by diverse audiences. His *Internet Symphony*, which was commissioned by Google/YouTube, has reached over fifteen million people online. *Paper Concerto* was premiered with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the opening of the Walt Disney Hall. His multimedia concerto, *The Map*, first performed by Yo Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has been included in the Carnegie Hall Composers Gallery. Important recent premières include *Four Secret Roads of Marco Polo* for the Berlin Philharmonic and *Piano Concerto 'The Fire'* for Lang Lang and the New York Philharmonic.

Tan Dun's inspiration culminates in his operatic creations: *Marco Polo*, commissioned by the Edinburgh Festival, has had multiple productions including with De Nederlandse Opera, directed by Pierre Audi; *The First Emperor* with Plácido Domingo, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera; *Tea: A Mirror of Soul*, first performed at Japan's Suntory Hall; and *Peony Pavilion*, directed by Peter Sellars which has had over fifty performances at major festivals.

Tan Dun's recordings have won many accolades, including a GRAMMY® Award (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and nominations (*The First Emperor*; *Marco Polo*; *Pipa Concerto*), Japan's Recording Academy Awards for Best Contemporary Music CD (*Water Passion after St Matthew*) and the BBC's Best Orchestral Album (*Death and Fire*).

Title Sponsor



This recording was made possible with the generous support of AIA.

The multifaceted and multi-award winner Tan Dun has made an indelible mark on the world music scene with a creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical music. The *Symphonic Poem on Three Notes* describes an evolutionary arc from nature through industry and back to nature, the traditional orchestra augmented with a range of unorthodox sound sources such as wind, stones and car brake drums. The drama of *Orchestral Theatre* centres on memories of ritual from the composer's childhood, linking folk music styles to Western atonality, while the *Concerto for Orchestra* describes the exoticism of Marco Polo's geographical, musical and spiritual journeys.

## TAN DUN Concerto for Orchestra

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|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | <b>Symphonic Poem on Three Notes (2012)</b> | <b>12:15</b> |
| 2 | <b>Orchestral Theatre (1990)</b>            | <b>18:05</b> |
|   | <b>Concerto for Orchestra (2012)</b>        | <b>34:31</b> |
| 3 | <b>Light of Timespace</b>                   | <b>9:07</b>  |
| 4 | <b>Scent of Bazaar</b>                      | <b>4:43</b>  |
| 5 | <b>The Raga of Desert</b>                   | <b>13:48</b> |
| 6 | <b>The Forbidden City</b>                   | <b>6:52</b>  |

## Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra Tan Dun



This recording was made possible with the generous support of AIA.

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