

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thanks to my composition teachers Narongrit Dharmabutra, Stephen Taylor, David Feurzeig, James Mobberley, Paul Rudy, Zhou Long, and my primary teacher and mentor Chen Yi for their trust and investment in me and my music.

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CREDITS

Producer: Narong Prangcharoen
Co-producer: Kaho Cheung

*Whispering, Between Heaven and Earth and
Bencharong*

Recording and mixing engineer: Robert Beck

Antahkarana and Vedana

Recording and mixing engineer: Kaho Cheung

Mantras

Recording and mixing engineer: Mark R. Bunce

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Narong Prangcharoen

MANTRAS
WHISPERING
BETWEEN HEAVEN & EARTH
ANTAHKARANA
BENCHARONG
VEDANA



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The music of Thai composer **Narong Prangcharoen** has been called “absolutely captivating” (*Chicago Sun Times*). Prangcharoen has established an international reputation and is recognized as one of Thailand’s leading composers. He has received many international prizes, including the Alexander Zemlinsky International Composition Competition Prize, the 18th ACL Yoshiro IRINO Memorial Composition Award, the Pacific Symphony’s American Composers Competition Prize, the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award, the Music Teacher National Association (USA), and the Annapolis Charter 300 International Composers Competition Prize. In 2007, the

Thai government named Prangcharoen a Contemporary National Artist and awarded him the Silapathorn Award, one of Thailand’s most prestigious honors. He was awarded the 20th American Composers Orchestra Underwood New Music Commission and the Audience Choice Award.

Prangcharoen’s music has been performed in Asia, America, Australia, and Europe by many renowned ensembles such as the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Pacific Symphony, the Grant Park Orchestra, the Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bohuslav Martin Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony Orchestra, the China Philharmonic Orchestra, the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, the German National Theater Orchestra, the Toledo Symphony Orchestra and the American Composers Orchestra under many well-known conductors, such as Carl St. Clair, Carlos Kalmer, Jose-Luis Novo, Osmo Vänskä, and Mikhail Pletnev. His music has also been presented by, among others, the New York New Music Ensemble, the Imani Winds, and pianist Bennett Lerner.

Prangcharoen’s music has been performed at many important music festivals, such as the Grant Park Music Festival, the Asia: the 21st Century Orchestra Project, the MoMA Music Festival, Maverick Concerts: “Music in the Wood,” Beijing Modern Music Festival and at Lincoln Center and the Library of Congress.

Prangcharoen received his DMA from the University of Missouri-Kansas City where he studied with Chen Yi. In addition to working as a freelance composer, he is currently teaching at the Community Music and Dance Academy of the Conservatory of Music, University of Missouri in Kansas City. Prangcharoen is the founder of the Thailand International Composition Festival in Thailand, now in its seventh year.

THE MUSIC

Throughout my life, I have had two basic sources of inspiration, the power of nature and the power of the mind. Most of my music has been for symphony orchestra, but occasionally I have had the opportunity to write chamber music, mostly on commission. In chamber music, the musicians communicate with each other in a more complex, more intimate, and, perhaps, more complex way than in orchestral music. In my chamber music, the sources of my inspiration and my musical language are the same as stated above, but the textures and colors are varied to suit the chamber medium. This CD is the second recording of my music and is made up of mostly chamber music, with one piece for large wind ensemble. I hope the listener will enjoy hearing my music in another medium. I invite listeners to explore this new world of sound in my music. I hope they will be moved by it.

Whispering for soprano saxophone, bass clarinet, piano, and percussion

Whispering is the sound produced when one speaks very softly, using one’s breath rather than one’s vocal cords, with a sort of hissing quality of sound, as when one exhales or inhales. Whispering is generally soft, in order to limit the hearing of the sound to only one or a few nearby persons. Occasionally, whispering is used by someone who has lost their ability to produce a loud voice.

In this piece, the whispering is between Mother Earth and mankind. In the past few years, there have been many major destructive natural disasters, for example, the Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the 2008 cyclone, Nargis, in Burma, and the earthquake in Sichuan province, China, the same year. Is Mother Earth trying to communicate with mankind with her whispers? Are those destructive disasters warnings?

Whispering has three main sections: “Call from Mother Earth,” “Mourning (Communication Between Heaven and Earth),” and “Pray for the Living of Mankind.” The first section begins with aggressive gestures to convey the message from Mother Earth, i.e., the disasters. The sounds of the instruments gradually build up to a big wave of sound at the end of this message. The second section, “Mourning,” is a lyrical conversation between two backstage instruments, soprano saxophone and bass clarinet. This section also imitates the sounds of the atmosphere in a Buddhist temple, trying to capture the pure spirit that connects heaven and earth. The last section, “Pray for the Living of the Mankind,” is fast and dance-like, joyful and energetic. It is a dance for the survival of mankind. Will mankind live on this earth for another 1,000 years? All of mankind can cooperate to make Mother Earth become peaceful again. There is always hope.

Antahkarana for viola

This piece was commissioned by my friend, the violist Michael Hall. Antahkarana is an ancient symbol that has been used since antiquity as a tool for healing and meditation. The symbol focuses energy and increases the power of healing. It is believed to reduce the time necessary for healing, thus allowing deeper issues to be worked on. It has been used to enhance meditation and other modalities used in energy work, with the goal of health, well-being, and connection to the higher power. I hope that we all can help Mother Earth to connect to the healing power of Antahkarana and that the injuries that we as human being have caused her can be healed.

Bencharong for flute, cello, and piano

The Thai word “bencharong” means “five-colored” and describes the five colors used in decorating traditional Thai porcelain, that is, red, blue, yellow, white, and black. The most distinctive features of Bencharong porcelain were the complexity and the regularity of the five-colored designs depicting mythological creatures, such as an angels and heavenly maidens, and stylized flowers and animals, particularly birds and deer. Bencharong was made in China for the 18th and 19th century Ayutthaya and Bangkok royal courts, using designs drawn by Thai aristocrats.

This composition is a set of five short pieces, each one, using a characteristic set of notes and textures, representing the character of one color. I used the variety of sounds to suggest the feelings suggested to the listener by each individual color. Though maintaining the distinct sound of each color, the movements connect smoothly with each other, as happens with the colors of Bencharong porcelain.

Vedana for violin, horn in F, and piano

The Sanskrit word, “vedana,” is traditionally translated as “sensation”. This does not refer to an emotional feeling, but, rather, to physical sensation. There are many degrees of vedana, depending on the external and internal conditions that are the result of physical contact.

In this piece, the varying intensities of texture, volume, timbre are the main factors used to create sensations in the listener. The main melodic idea is not presented in its full form until the end of the piece. *Vedana* was commissioned by 3rd Angle.

Mantras for soprano saxophone and wind ensemble

Mantras are mystic sounds that are said to produce certain type of energies, depending on the sound, vibration, and rhythm of each mantra. They are considered to have both physical and mental transformative powers and it is believed that mantras have the power to heal, beyond their mere physical sounds. Music, likewise, is not merely a medium in which the artist expresses himself, but can have practical and powerful healing applications. The idea of using mantras for healing is the main inspiration for this piece. If mantras can heal human beings, it is hoped here to provide at least one mantra to help heal Mother Earth.

—Narong Prangcharoen

THE PERFORMERS

Jonathan Borja holds a D.M.A. in flute performance from the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance where he also earned an M.M. in musicology and an M.M. in flute performance. He has researched the music of Mexican composers Silvestre Revueltas and Mario Lavista. As a flutist, Dr. Borja has performed throughout the United States and Mexico. He has been a prizewinner at the St. Louis Artist Presentation Competition, the UMKC Concerto Competition, and the SAI Young Artists Competition. Dr. Borja has collaborated with composers such as George Crumb, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, James Mobberley, and Yehudi Wyner. He is currently Instructor of Music at the UMKC Conservatory and Second Flutist with the Topeka Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Ben Gitter received a D.M.A. in Cello Performance and M.M. in Music Theory from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2009. Prior to that, he completed his B.Mus. and M.Mus. in Cello Performance at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, where he graduated with the Alumni Gold Medal. Dr. Gitter is currently active in southwestern Ontario as a cello, theory & orchestra instructor, adjudicator, and chamber musician. While residing in Kansas City, he was a frequent clinician with the Blue Valley School District, and also adjudicated for the Kansas State High School Activities Association. From 2008-2010, he was a Visiting Instructor of Music Theory at the University of Central Missouri, where he taught fundamentals, theory and aural skills. Dr. Gitter has performed and toured in Europe, China, Canada, and the United States. He has recorded on the Naxos and Navona Records labels in addition to producing an independent CD with his string trio in 2006. He recently finished editing a manuscript of Reinhard Oppel’s Suite for Solo Cello, and is currently researching fugal structure and harmony in the solo cello suites of Max Reger and Johann Sebastian Bach. Dr. Gitter is a Sessional Instructor at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, where he teaches aural skills and music theory.

Michael Hall lives in Chicago and has performed and taught across Europe, Asia and the United States. Described by the *New Music Connoisseur* as “utterly masterful,” he has been a featured performer at the Thailand International Composition Festival, Positano Chamber Music Festival in Italy, Vianden International Chamber Music Festival in Luxembourg and New York University’s Composer’s Concordance. He has presented world premieres at the International Viola Congresses in Minneapolis and Reykjavik, Iceland. Compositions written especially for Hall include works by Narong Prangcharoen,

Mara Gibson, and Marta Ptaszynska. Recently, Hall performed Chen Yi’s viola concerto, *Xian Shi* with the Chiang Mai Philharmonic in Thailand, and will present its U.S. premiere with the Chicago Composers Orchestra. He has recorded for the Delos, Centaur, Acoma, Clarion, and Vienna Modern Masters labels. Hall regularly performs with the Chicago Philharmonic, Ravinia Festival, and Chroma Chamber Orchestras. He teaches at Illinois Wesleyan University, VanderCook College of Music, and the Chicago Academy for the Arts. He plays a viola made by Ferruccio Varagnolo.

Described as a “sensitive musician with an ear for color” by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, pianist **Brendan Kinsella** has performed widely throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He earned his B.M. and M.M. degrees at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music as a pupil of Frank Weinstock and received his D.M.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City as a student of Robert Weirich. He completed his training as a Solo Piano Fellow at the Music Academy of the West under the guidance of Jerome Lowenthal. In 2010, he debuted in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall and was a concerto soloist at the prestigious Midwest Clinic in Chicago. Kinsella has performed concerti ranging from Beethoven to Barber with the Kentucky Symphony, the Jefferson City Symphony, and conservatory orchestras of CCM and UMKC, with conductors such as Xian Zhang, Steve Davis, and Robert Olson. A sought-after collaborator, he has appeared both as an orchestral pianist and in recital with members of the New World Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Orchestras, the Omaha Symphony, and the Kansas City Symphony. Since 2010, he has coached and performed as a Guest Artist in Collaborative Piano at the soundSCAPE Composition Festival in Italy. Presently, he serves as Assistant Professor of Piano

at the University of Texas-Pan American and frequently appears in duo-recitals with his wife, Shoko. His recording of Messiaen's *Oiseaux Exotiques* is commercially available on the MarkRecords Classical label.

English/Thai Pianist **Christopher Janwong McKiggan** has won numerous awards, including the gold medal at the Seattle International Piano Competition, second prize Kingsville International Music competition, first prize Bradshaw and Buono International piano competition, finalist in the World International piano competition, winner in the UMKC concerto competition, second prize in the Rice Concerto Competition, and first prize of the MMTA Piano State Level Competition, among others. He has performed at numerous venues including Weill Recital Hall, Benaroya Hall, Hahn Hall, Jin Mao Concert Hall, and Folley Theatre. He is founding pianist of the Bangkok Piano Trio and Eon Piano Trio, with one of their concerts graced by the presence of H.R.H Princess Galyani Vadhana, and was a member of the De Camera Young Artists Program. He has collaborated with great composers of today, including Claude Baker, Robert Beaser, Paul Lansky, Zhou Long, and James Mobberley. He has been featured in spotlights and photo shoots in several television shows, magazines, and newspapers including the Thai-Chinese channel, *Cosmopolitan* magazine Thailand, *Harper's Bazaar Men Thailand*, *Longmont Times Call*, and *Daily Sound*, among others. He has studied at Rice University with Jon Kimura Parker and at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with Dr. Robert Weirich.

Bruce Moss is professor and director of bands at Bowling Green State University, where he teaches conducting and music education courses and conducts the Wind Symphony. Prior to his appointment at BGSU in 1994, he held similar positions at Eastern Illinois University and St. Cloud State University. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from University of Illinois and his Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Dr. Moss' teaching career began at York Community High School in Elmhurst, Illinois, where for 11 years he led an exemplary program as director of bands and was music department chair. In the summer months, he continues to serve as music director of the Wheaton Municipal Band in Illinois, a professional ensemble regarded as one of the finest of its kind in operation today. Moss is a Past President of the College Band Directors National Conference, North Central Division, and is National Vice President for Professional Relations of Kappa Kappa Psi. He is a published author and new music reviewer for *The Instrumentalist* magazine, as well as for the GIA publication, *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band*. He was elected to membership in the American Bandmasters Association in 1993 and holds memberships in the National Band Association, the Ohio Music Educators Association, the Music Educators National Conference, and numerous honorary music fraternities.

As one of America's leading concert saxophonists, **John Sampen** is particularly recognized as a distinguished artist in contemporary literature. He has commissioned more than 100 new works, including compositions by Adler, Babbitt, Bolcom, Cage, Rzewski, Rands and Subotnick and has premiered saxophone versions of music by Lutoslawski, Stockhausen, and Tower.

Sampen has soloed with ensembles from all over the world, including the Nürnberg Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Internazionale d'Italy, New Mexico Symphony, Toledo Symphony, and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. An English critic praises "the excellence, the musicianship and the total involvement of John Sampen...tremendous passion and eloquence."

Sampen has recorded with Belgian and Swiss National Radio and is represented on the Orion, CRI, Albany, and Capstone record labels. A clinician for the Conn-Selmer Company, he has presented masterclasses at important universities and conservatories throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. In addition to contemporary literature, Sampen regularly performs traditional saxophone repertoire in recital with pianist/composer Marilyn Shrude. Dr. Sampen is currently a Distinguished Artist Professor at Bowling Green State University and is Past President of the North American Saxophone Alliance.

newEar Contemporary Chamber Ensemble dedicates itself to performing and commissioning the music of today's composers. Now in its 19th season, the ensemble was originally founded by a group of musicians with a common interest in contemporary music. Since their debut concert in 1994, their audience has grown and critical support has remained strong. newEar offers its listeners unique and eclectic programming that continually questions the definition of "new music." In nineteen seasons, the ensemble has premiered more than 80 compositions — living music by living composers. In July 2011, newEar traveled to Chiangmai, Thailand, as artists in residence at the seventh annual Thailand International Composition Festival. That same year, the ensemble was the recipient of the 2011 Pitch MasterMind performance award for "...contributions

that have influenced the metro's cultural and creative landscape." In January 2009, newEar was awarded first prize for Adventurous Programming from Chamber Music America (CMA) and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

newEar performs an annual concert series and has collaborated with the Owen/Cox dance group and Gamelan Genta Kasturi, as well as co-hosting the 2nd International Conference on Minimalist Music in 2009. The group has received numerous Performance Award grants from the Aaron Copland Fund of the American Music Center in New York.

newEar players on this recording include Thomas Aber, bass clarinet; Jan Faidley, soprano saxophone; Mark Lowry, percussion, and Robert Pherigo, piano.

Founded in 1985, **Third Angle New Music Ensemble** has become a primary creative force in the cultural landscape of Portland, Oregon, and the Pacific Northwest. Its mission is to perform and record masterworks of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and commissioning new works from regional and nationally recognized composers. Over the past 21 seasons, Third Angle has presented more than 90 programs of contemporary music, commissioned over thirty new works, and released seven recordings to critical acclaim, firmly establishing its place as one of the foremost presenters of contemporary American music in the United States. Third Angle maintains a revolving roster of distinguished guest artists comprised, of the best players from the top performing institutions in Portland, including the Oregon Symphony, Portland Opera, Forestan Tio, and Chamber Music Northwest.



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- 1 *Whispering* [10:46]
newEar Contemporary Chamber Ensemble
- 2 *Between Heaven and Earth* [6:54]
Jonathan Borja, flute
Christopher Janwong McKiggan, piano
- 3 *Antahkarana* [5:03]
Michael Hall, viola
- Bencharong*
- 4 Red [1:08]
- 5 Blue [2:22]
- 6 Yellow [1:45]
- 7 White [1:53]
- 8 Black [1:38]
Jonathan Borja, flute | Ben Gitter, cello
Brendan Kinsella, piano
- 9 *Verdana* [7:56]
Third Angle New Music Ensemble
- 10 *Mantras* [14:09]
John Sampen, soprano saxophone
Bowling Green State University Wind Symphony
Bruce Moss, conductor

Total Time = 53:55

