

Jason Kao Hwang/Sing House

Jason Kao Hwang – composer, violin, viola

Andrew Drury – drum set

Ken Filiano – string bass

Chris Forbes – piano

Steve Swell - trombone

1. No Such Thing (13:55)
2. Dream Walk (11:59)
3. When What Could (11:14)
4. Inscribe (12:17)

Total duration = 49:24

All compositions by Jason Kao Hwang

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Euonymus Records EU03 jasonkaohwang.com

Produced by Jason Kao Hwang

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Recording Engineer: Kyle Cassel

Mix Engineer: Jason Kao Hwang

Mix Consultant: Ken Filiano

Mastering Engineer: Paul Zinman, Soundbyte Productions

Photographer: Reuben Radding

Liner Notes: patrick brennan

Special Thanks: Gennevieve Lam

Jason Kao Hwang's music crossroads the long considered thought & incremental evolution with the contagious flash of the unexpected. His compositional design is as interesting as the improvisations he sets into motion—no small thing—as the two are by disposition as dissimilar as they are interdependent. He navigates clear of both the serendipity indebted defaults of free improvisation & the *nature morte* wannabe artifacts of thoroughly precomposed sonic imagery to coordinate torsion meadows for live invention within both/and feedback relationships. The working reference episodes, the interludes & underpinnings that punctuate & launch ensemble response become themselves reciprocally, over time, reshaped by their own experience of performance. Each makes the other stronger & sound more strongly. This a powerful, subtle & not all so obvious a skill.

A close listen with Sing House hints that Hwang relates with sound more as actual living substance than as illustrational embellishment for abstract ideas. Filmmaking engaged him before music & the violin eventually drew him elsewhere, & I believe this informs the way he imagines so effectively outside the standard issue musician box. I asked him about that.

Film made me aware of the dynamic between linear narrative development & vertical, emotional depth, which occur simultaneously. The contextual power of architecture & the physical mass of landscapes also inspire my

compositions. In each of these analogous perspectives, the instrument is not an instrument but a human being evolving through the sound.

That's what I hear in the music. Each sonic event arrives, & speaks, absorbs & engages as an *image*. Each image-moment induces a suspension, a jaw-dropped interval of aesthetic arrest through which one might slip enchanted despite oneself. This feels mysterious because the shifts between instances are so plain, so obvious, unapologetic, simple, direct ... yet still absolutely surprising.

How did all that happen? Where did I just travel? Why did one event follow the other the way it did? And where did *that* come from?

There's a logic to landscape that might calculate geological sense, but, to the traveler, isn't necessarily linked spot to spot by any conversationally predictable logic. This sort of inexplicable is-ness is likely part of the wonder that landscape especially invites through motion. There's something confounding about it, with its mind so different than human. We know it makes sense, & we have to accept this, mystification & all, because the palpable reality yields so non-negotiably.

The words *Sing House* might wax stereogram descriptive. Consider a music that sings itself from room to room—each unfurling distinct landscape, all situated within architecture amenable to expansive diversity—a music that heeds the silent dreamings of terrain or evocative enclosure, yet capable of doing what neither would be able to literally materialize.

Jason & I conversed about his choices in bypassing conventional theme solosolosolo theme jazz formats so as to spur more of a journey. He mentioned Toru Takemitsu, who'd coordinated some music in the manner of a garden, with attention toward which sounds might be round, long, thorned & so forth.

For Hwang, Western habits of theme & reiteration, etc. have grown so familiar & obvious that to call on them would feel intellectually cute. He's come instead to designate less & less while shaping a compositional matrix. Melodic sketches, sometimes built from unusual interval combinations, might get reworked by ear, over & over, until an irreducible identity arrives. Critical call & response, ever alert to his collaborators' propensities, to their individual sounds & to their combination, helps discover what might come before—or after—each of these constellations.

The geological irregularity of Hwang's construction is entirely deliberate. His procedures incorporate strategies kin with assemblage & with subtractive sculpture—the subtractive an especially decisive agent in the music's aura of transverbal mystery. Pruning intensifies the phenomenological presence of what one hears, while the echoes & shadows of what's been removed never fully disclose themselves. What bends & transforms around all of this is the "group mind" plasticity specific to this particular gathering of musical actors.

For Jason Kao Hwang, music stages that active imagination within which "we imagine who we are." He's chosen throughout his musical work to engage & make relationship with his total sound history, & in that, (to paraphrase James Baldwin's conception) accept & achieve his own temporal identity. It's hard to find anything more valuable to admire in an artist (or in a person) than an accomplished willingness to do just that.

- patrick brennan, composer & saxophonist

The music is a house, with the score's quintessential melodies, rhythms, harmonies, and textures offering rooms in which musicians extemporaneously sing. In this dramatic architecture, the unique voice of each musician is empowered to individually interpret and also, transcend interpretation to become an originating spirit that is inextricably unified to the composition's destiny. This is how music grows greater than the imagination of one to become a meta-language of memories, dreams, and hope.

Though this is the first CD of Sing House, my new quintet, we have worked together in various constellations for over ten years. Andrew and Ken were in my past quartet EDGE, and current octet Burning Bridge, project VOICE and string orchestra, Spontaneous River. Steve is also a member of Burning Bridge. Chris and I have performed as a duo and with Steve's bands. My thanks to all of them and patrick brennan, for their friendship, creativity, and artistry.

- Jason Kao Hwang (jasonkaohwang.com)