PASIC 2018

~Stepping Stones~

Pius Cheung & Eriko Daimo

Marimba Duo Recital
Thursday, November 15th, 2018, 4pm

PROGRAM

Verano Porteño
Astor Piazzolla (arr. Pius Cheung)

Stepping Stones (U.S. premiere)
Michael Udow

Princess Chang Ping (U.S. premiere)
Pius Cheung

Rhapsody in Blue
George Gershwin (arr. Pius Cheung)
PROGRAM NOTES

**Verano Porteño** (Buenos Aires Summer) is part of a set of four tangos compositions by Astor Piazzolla called Estaciones Porteñas or The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires.

**Stepping Stones**, a wedding gift request by Pius Cheung and Eriko Daimo, is dedicated to them. In contemplating this new work, I asked Pius and Eriko to each share a melody that they fondly recalled from their childhood memories. Pius provided an ancient traditional Chinese song, *The Unfinished Love of the Phoenix Princess*. Eriko forwarded two melodies by two distinguished and highly respected composers. *Herding Cattle and Mountain Witch* composed by Mr. Shigeaki Saegusa was from Eriko’s favorite puppet show that she watched as a child. The second melody came in the form of a video file that Eriko’s mother made for me. Mrs. Daimo, cradling the family cat in her arms and swaying from side to side sang *Swing...Buranko* composed by Mr. Yasushi Akutagawa. With kind permission granted by Saegusa-san and Mrs. Akutagawa (a composer in her own right), I distilled these two melodies along with *The Phoenix Princess*, reshaping them and then weaving contrapuntal lines ~ over under around and through these themes.

I am deeply grateful to Mr. Saegusa and Mrs. Akutagawa for their permission to quote these compositions as my intent was to create a work that would elicit memories that Eriko and Pius could share with one another as they embarked on preparing Stepping Stones. - - - M.U.

**Princess Chang Ping** (2012, revised 2016) is based on the final theme from the Cantonese Opera, *Di Nü Hua*, by Tang Ti-sheng. It is a melody my grandmother sang to me as a child, therefore in my heart it is more a folk song than an art song. The opera is based on a semi-fictional story about the Ming Dynasty Princess Chang Ping and her lover Zhou Shixian. The princess met Zhou and fell in love, but they were separated in war as the Manchurian army overthrew her father’s kingdom. She then became a nun, but eventually met Zhou again when they were both captured by the new regime. The new emperor granted them marriage, but as an act of loyalty to her father and faith to her lover, she chose to end her life with Zhou by drinking poison wine at their wedding. In the end, they became a pair of flowers and their spirits rose up to heaven to rejoin her family. The composition is loosely programmatic; focusing primarily on the complicated emotions at the wedding. To a certain extent, the marimba soloist represents the main protagonist, Princess Chang Ping. Princess Chang Ping was commissioned and premiered by Pei-Ching Wu and the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra under Fusao Kajima in 2012. Since then, the work has undergone several revisions. The most recent revision was written in 2016. It was performed by Eriko Daimo with the Tampere Philharmonic under Santtu-Matias Rouvali.

*The version today is a special arrangement for marimba duo, featuring Ms. Daimo on solo marimba and myself on the orchestra part reduced for marimba. In this arrangement, Ms. Daimo also joins me in a few orchestral tutti moments when the sound of one marimba is lacking in comparison to the full orchestra. Also, various places, such as the original marimba cadenza, are shortened and altered for this marimba duo version. - - - Pius Cheung
*Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin is a timeless American classic. This version for marimba duo is slightly shorter than the original. The arrangement consists of a combination of adapting from the original and new materials based on Gershwin’s themes.