



DA CAPO CHAMBER PLAYERS

MUSICAL OFFERINGS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Building awareness with the universal language of music

A series of three online events combining performances from the ensemble's digital archives with current conversations, each anchored by our shared conviction that the more we explore, experience, and understand cultural differences and varying viewpoints as captured in music, the more we honor and celebrate every individual's right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Patricia Spencer *series curator*

PROGRAM II

YouTube Premiere

Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 7 pm (EDT)

ASIAN ECHOES

Works by Chinary Ung and Chou Wen-chung — music in celebration of a Cambodian song tradition in a time when it was forbidden, and of the Chinese "tian di ren – heaven, earth, and humanity"

Harvey Sollberger *host*

Chinary Ung, Michael Lipsey, Marianne Gythfeldt, Patricia Spencer, *speakers*

PROGRAM

I.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Harvey Sollberger, Patricia Spencer

II.

Introduction to Chinary Ung's piece

Patricia Spencer

III.

Child Song (1985) Chinary Ung (b. 1942)

Patricia Spencer *flute*, Curtis Macomber *violin*, Chris Gross *cello*, Steven Beck *piano*
performance from June 5, 2019 at Merkin Hall, Kaufman Music Center, NYC

Lia Di Stefano, *images* | Andrés León, *video*

IV.

Commentary and Discussion on Child Song

Chinary Ung, Harvey Sollberger, Marianne Gythfeldt, Patricia Spencer

V.

Introduction to Chou Wen-chung's piece

Harvey Sollberger

VI.

Ode to Eternal Pine (2009) **Chou Wen-chung** (1923 - 2019)

Prelude – Meditating on Eternity – Ode to Eternal Pines – Lofty Peaks – Profound Gorges
(movements played without pause)

Patricia Spencer *flute*, Nuno Antunes *guest clarinet*, Curtis Macomber *violin*, Chris Gross *cello*,
Steven Beck *piano*, Michael Lipsey *guest percussion*

performance from June 5, 2019 at Merkin Hall, Kaufman Music Center, NYC

Lia Di Stefano, *images* | Andrés León, *video*

VII.

Commentary and Discussion on Ode to Eternal Pine

Michael Lipsey, Chinary Ung, Harvey Sollberger, Marianne Gythfeldt, Patricia Spencer

VIII.

Closing Remarks

Harvey Sollberger, Marianne Gythfeldt, Patricia Spencer

ABOUT THE WORKS

Child Song, written by Chinary Ung in 1985, was originally written for alto flute, viola, cello and harp and was commissioned as a birthday gift for the celebration of Jerome Apfel's 56th birthday in Philadelphia. The work was premiered by members of the Concerto Soloists of Philadelphia, with Chinary Ung's wife, Susan, playing viola. The version for flute, violin, violoncello, and piano was commissioned by the Chicago Ensemble and funded by the NEA Consortium Program. The work occupies an important place in the composer's oeuvre, for it is with this piece that he emerged fully from a self-imposed period of creative silence that began in 1974 and had seen him compose just one work in the intervening years. Composing receded into the background when Ung's work to preserve Cambodian musical culture became the priority in a time of extreme tumult in the country. During those ten years, he taught himself to play the Roneat-Ek, the Cambodian Xylophone of the Pinpeat tradition, and was quite active performing. *Child Song* has two particular inspirations: it was written as Ung's wife, Susan, was pregnant with their first child, and it contains a transcription of a song Ung remembered from his own childhood in rural Cambodia. The song itself is a Cambodian analog of "pat-a-cake" insofar as it accompanies a clapping game. The innocence of this moment in the piece, where dance-like unison rhythms prevail, comes in sharp contrast to the meditative expressive domain that dominates the piece. There is uncertainty and questioning—even foreboding—surrounding the moments of youthful ebullience, as if the composer were considering not only his child's future, but the futures of those with whom he had played clapping games as a child.

How many of them had been extinguished? A portion of the text is as follows below.

— *Chinary and Susan Ung*

*Pour the coconut juice
the rooster's tail
wears the crocodile coat
the crocodile rides the horse
and, I ride the elephant*

Ode to Eternal Pine, written by **Chou Wen-chung** in 2009 and commissioned by the New York New Music Ensemble, is based on material from *Eternal Pine* commissioned by the Contemporary Music Ensemble of Korea (CMEK) for an ensemble of traditional Korean instruments. It is composed in the spirit and style of *chong ak*, the ancient Korean chamber music, retaining its tempo, meter, and modal characteristics with emphasis on the fluidity of instrumental voices rather than exploitation of novel colors. *Chong ak* is dedicated to the expression of human emotion inspired by natural phenomena but projected with serenity and dignity. In East Asian cultures, the pine tree, often seen on mountain peaks, is a symbol of longevity and the eternity of nature. “Meditating on Eternity” is a reflection on the fundamental aesthetic principle of East Asia, as expressed in the Chinese terms *tian di ren*, heaven, earth and humanity. It suggests human emotion within the timelessness of the universe and the physical constraints on earth, the two axes symbolized by the subsequent movements, “Lofty Peaks” and “Profound Gorges.” The original thematic material and its development in each of the movements are continual transformations of a nuclear idea introduced after the brief Prelude. It is structured according to my variable mode principle, which enables the music not only to transform itself but also to adapt itself from one tonal format to another, such as pentatonic or chromatic. *Ode to Eternal Pine* was dedicated to Elliott Carter. — *Chou Wen-chung*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Chinary Ung was born in Cambodia, and spent his early childhood in Prey Lvea, a small village surrounded by rice paddies. His first exposure to Western classical music was as a teenager, and he was so drawn to it that he came to New York in 1964 to study clarinet performance (at the Manhattan School of Music), and, later, composition with Chou Wen-chung at Columbia University. Over the past forty years Chinary Ung has developed a musical language that indicates an open ear toward the sounds of the East—South-east Asia and his native Cambodia in particular—as well as the textures and instrumental practices of contemporary Western concert music. From the solo ‘cello piece *Khse Buon*, to the Grawemeyer Award-winning *Inner Voices*, to the epic *Aura*, Ung’s music is characterized by a vivid sound world with an intense emotional trajectory. Ung’s extensive orchestral catalog has been commissioned and performed by major orchestras throughout the United States and abroad. Boston Modern Orchestra Project released a recording of Ung’s orchestral music in 2015. His work has been commissioned by the Meet the Composer/Reader’s Digest Commissioning Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ford, Koussevitsky, Joyce, and Barlow Foundations. In 2014 he was given the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award by the Asian Cultural Council. He was a 2020 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Ung has worked with numerous institutions that share his dedication toward preserving Cambodian culture and

forging cultural exchange between Asia and the West. As an educator, Ung has instructed generations of young composers at several institutions in the United States and now, through a series of residencies, in Asia as well. He is a Distinguished Professor of Music at University of California, San Diego, and the founder of the Nirmita Composers Institute.



Chou Wen-chung's most recent recording is entitled *Eternal Pine*. Produced in 2015, the recording features four chamber pieces, each written for instruments of a different cultural lineage. In East Asian cultures, the ancient pine tree is a familiar symbol of longevity and of perseverance against the adversities of life. Gnarled by the winds and forces of nature, the tree survives throughout the ages, its beauty enhanced by the brutality which it has endured. For the composer, the image represents the spirit of the Chinese literati scholar, or wenren, whose integrity is unwavering despite persecution and suffering. In looking back over almost 10 decades of the composer's life, the resilient pine seems emblematic of his own personal story, much of which has been expressed only through his music.

Chou Wen-chung joined the Columbia University faculty in 1964 and taught an increasingly international student body until his retirement in 1991. He created the University's first doctoral program in composition in 1965. He also made a significant contribution in the realm of arts education in both the U.S. and China through his determination to widen the cultural and geographical scope of courses taught in the curriculum. In 1969 he taught Columbia's first course on "Chinese Music" and later developed the course "Asian Humanities in Music." In 1984 he was named the first Fritz Reiner Professor of Musical Composition at Columbia University. When Chou Wen-chung began visiting East and Southeast Asia in the 1960's, he became aware of the need for the United States to undertake projects of cultural exchange with those regions. In 1978 he established the Center for United States-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University and became a pioneer in reconnecting cultural ties which had been severed for 30 years. The Center's first project was to organize violinist Isaac Stern's visit to China in 1979 and to assist in the filming of the Oscar-winning documentary *From Mao to Mozart*. The broad cultural significance of Chou's music and the scope of his contributions to the field can hardly be overstated. Chou Wen-chung was born in Yantai, China, in 1923, and moved to the United States in 1946. His earliest work, *Landscapes*, written in 1949, is often cited as the first composition in music history that is independent of either Western or Eastern musical grammar. The piece premiered in 1953 with the San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, and launched the young composer onto a career which steadily gained in momentum over his long life.

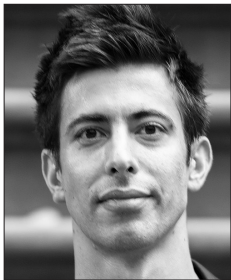


Harvey Sollberger is a composer, conductor, and flutist who has been active in many world musical centers. He was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1938, and holds degrees from the University of Iowa and Columbia University. Performers of his music have included Pierre Boulez, Gunther Schuller, Bruno Maderna, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, Tanglewood, and a wide array of contemporary music ensembles and international festivals. Sollberger has received support in the form of the Award of the American Institute of Arts and Letters, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and various commissions (Koussevitzky, Naumburg, Fromm, NEA). He co-founded the Group for Contemporary Music in

1962, and subsequently led new music ensembles at the Manhattan School of Music, Indiana University, and the University of California, San Diego in addition to being Music Director of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus from 1997 to 2005. As a performer he has given premieres of works by Babbitt, Carter, Davidovsky, Felder, Martino, Perle, Reynolds, and Wuorinen, and the American premieres of music by Feldman, Holler, Risset, Scelsi, Schnittke, Stockhausen, Tiensuu and Xenakis. His published discography currently stands at over 130 items.



Multi-percussionist **Michael Lipsey**, born in New York, has performed with the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society II, Newband/Harry Partch Instrumentarium, Riverside Symphony, founder: Talujon Percussion Quartet, Westchester Symphony, Tan Dun's Crossings, Ensemble Sospeso, New Music Consort. Festivals: Caramoor, Chataouqua Institute, Bang-on-a-Can, Lille Festival, Making Music in Moscow Festival, Berlin Festival, Taipei Percussion Festival, Osaka Percussion Festival. He has made recordings for Sony Classical with the BBC Symphony, Red Poppy Records, CRI Records, Mode Records, and Nonesuch Records. He is a founding member of Talujon Percussion Quartet. Currently he is the Chair of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College.



Born in Portugal, clarinetist **Nuno Antunes** performs extensively with a variety of ensembles in and around New York City. Nuno is currently a member of Sylvan Winds, Trio Cabrini, IRIS Orchestra and Principal Clarinetist with Opera Saratoga. He is a frequent collaborator with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of St Luke's, American Ballet Theatre, Albany Symphony Orchestra, Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, among others. He played clarinet and bass clarinet for the Broadway production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and he has been a substitute clarinetist for the productions of *My Fair Lady*, *The King and I*, *Sunset Boulevard* and *Sweeney Todd*. Antunes has performed as a guest artist with various chamber music groups, including the Parker Quartet, Da Capo Chamber Players, and the Jasper String Quartet. He holds degrees from Manhattan School of Music and Academia Nacional Superior de Orquestra.



The Da Capo Chamber Players has been hailed by *The New Yorker* as a “distinguished ensemble...at the center of the New York new-music scene for forty-five years” (May 2016). Winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award early in its trajectory (1973), the ensemble is about to enter its 50th season, celebrating with concerts during the 2021 – 2022 season with world premieres by Bruce Adolphe, Shirish Korde, and David Sanford. It is a five-member “Pierrot” ensemble (flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano).

The internationally acclaimed group has worked closely with today's most respected composers, building a heritage of present-day American chamber music drawn from an enormous spectrum of styles. Known for its unique and dedicated attention to every work, its dynamic performances are consistent with the highest musical standards found in performances of traditional repertoire. A further very important goal is to bring exciting American music to other destinations around the world, and to present musics of global cultures for American

audiences. The Da Capo Chamber Players' annual New York series has been praised for "superb" and "gripping" performances. Ground-breaking programs have included premieres by Elliott Carter, George Perle, Louis Karchin (*AMERICAN VISIONS*, setting of poems by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, with the poet as guest reader), Joan Tower, Shulamit Ran, Chinary Ung, and countless others.

The five ensemble members bring years of creative insight, involvement and artistic vision to our work and performances of today's repertoire, including over 150 works written especially for the group. Adventuresome programs with electronic sounds, works by young composers, collaborations with choreographers—all have sparked the imagination of listeners. Our Merkin Hall celebration of the centenary of Schoenberg's *PIERROT LUNAIRE* (with Lucy Shelton) received a standing ovation, just as it did again at New Music New College in Sarasota, FL, in 2016. In 2010, NPR named the ensemble's recording, *Chamber Music of Chinary Ung* (Bridge Records), as one of the five Best Contemporary Classical CDs of the Year. Educational outreach has always been and continues to be a vital part of our work. The ensemble shares its love and commitment to this important repertoire with next generation artists through its ongoing residency at Bard College and touring engagements that feature masterclasses, readings and performances. Further—as young composers continue to develop, after graduation, Da Capo continues to program them, advocating for and supporting their expanding careers.



Violinist **Curtis Macomber** enjoys a distinguished career as soloist, chamber musician, and teacher, and has long been recognized as one of this country's foremost interpreters of new music. His discography includes the complete Brahms and Grieg Sonatas; violin concertos by Martin Boykan and Laura Schwendinger. He is a member of the chamber music faculty of The Juilliard School and the violin faculties of the Manhattan and Mannes Schools of Music.



Cellist **Chris Gross** has premiered works by Pierre Boulez, John Zorn as well as Milton Babbitt's solo cello work, *More Melismata*. Following his performance of Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study II*, *The New York Times* wrote "...for 20 minutes this skinny young cellist...seemed like a musical master of the universe...." A founding member of the Talea Ensemble, Chris has been guest with ICE, Cygnus, Flux Quartet and many others. He is a Teaching Artist with the New York Philharmonic.



Flutist **Patricia Spencer** enjoys a career marked by exciting premieres: NY premiere of Elliott Carter's *Flute Concerto*; US premieres of Stockhausen's *Kathinkas Gesang als Luzifers Requiem* and Thea Musgrave's *Narcissus*; world premiere of Shulamit Ran's concerto, *Voices*. About the Carter: "Ms. Spencer's impressive performance had all the 'beautiful qualities' and 'extraordinary agility' Mr. Carter could have asked for." (Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*).




Clarinetist **Marianne Gythfeldt** has played a central role in the music scene of New York City over the past 25 years. Winning the Naumburg chamber music award with New Millennium Ensemble in 1995, plus performing with Ensemble Sospeso, SEM ensemble, Collide-o-scope Music, Zephyros Winds and Talea Ensemble, she is also Director of the Brooklyn Conservatory. A recent solo CD (New Focus) was called "...stunning, Gythfeldt is setting a new standard for her instrument here."



For highly acclaimed pianist **Steven Beck**, highlights include Beethoven's variations and bagatelles at Bargemusic, where he first performed the Beethoven sonata cycle. Beck has worked with Elliott Carter, Pierre Boulez, Henri Dutilleux, Charles Wuorinen, George Crumb, George Perle, and Fred Lerdahl, and performed with Speculum Musicae, New York New Music Ensemble. Besides Da Capo, he is a member of the Knights, Talea Ensemble, and Quattro Mani. His discography includes Peter Lieberman's third piano concerto and Elliott Carter's *Double Concerto*. He is a Steinway Artist.

www.dacapochamberplayers.org

Booking Inquiries: John Gingrich Management

The Da Capo Chamber Players is a presenter partner of  composers now

NEXT EVENT IN THIS SERIES

PROGRAM III

YouTubePremiere

Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at 7pm (EDT)

PAEAN TO MERGING CULTURES

Exploring sounds of Native American history—merged with African American history in Valerie Coleman's *Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes*—and as memorialized in Kyle Gann's *Hovenweep*.

Bruce Adolphe *host*

Kyle Gann, Whitney Slaten, members of Da Capo, *speakers*

Series Background Music: *Petroushkates* (1980) by Joan Tower, founding pianist of Da Capo Chamber Players commissioned by the ensemble in honor of its 10th anniversary – *performance by Da Capo Chamber Players at Bard College, September 10, 2014*

Consultants for *Musical Offerings for Human Rights* series:

Amy Roberts Frawley *producer*, Hemsing Associates *public relations*,
Andrés León *technical director*, Lia Di Stefano *graphic designer*, Sarah Elia *social media*

This series is dedicated to the memory of Bernard Hulbert, MD

The concerts of the Da Capo Chamber Players
are made possible in part with public funds from:

National Endowment for the Arts

which believes that a great nation deserves great art

They are also made possible with private funds from:

The Aaron Copland Fund for Music

The Alice M. Ditson Fund

The Amphion Foundation

Hulbert Charitable Trust

Zethus Fund

and generous individuals