

Chen T'ang Gao

**Schnittke Piano Quintet (alternate: Shostakovich Quintet)
Gao Ping Piano Quintet (premiere 31 July 2009)
Dvorak Piano Quintet**

A Festival programme of Piano Quintets with John Chen (Piano, New Zealand) and the T'ang Quartet (Singapore) with the premiere of a substantial work to stand alongside the Schnittke (or Shostakovich) and Dvorak quintets by internationally respected Chinese-born NZ composer Gao Ping. The Asian-themed ensemble is being assembled for the 2009 Christchurch Arts Festival, where the Gao Ping commission will receive its world-premiere.



Sydney International Piano Competition Winner **John Chen**

"...brings to mind those few really creative interpreter-pianists like Richter and Serkin"

Clive O'Connell, The [Melbourne] Age

"...a remarkable pianist, and a musician wise beyond his years..."

John Button, The Dominion Post

Singapore's foremost String Ensemble, the **T'ang Quartet**

"flashes of inspired synchronicity that fired the senses into overdrive, even euphoria."

The Scotsman (Edinburgh International Festival '07)

"...pushed the musical envelope in a variety of refreshing ways..."

Business Times (Singapore International Festival '07)



Internationally-recognized Chinese New Zealand composer **Gao Ping**

Gao Ping is a "total musician...and a composer whose effortless fluency I envy deeply."

New Zealand "Dean" of composers Jack Body

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JOHN CHEN At 18, John Chen was the youngest-ever winner of the prestigious Sydney International Piano Competition, and was also awarded special prizes for best performance of works by Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Chamber Music, and the 19th/20th Century Concerto. Since then he has become one of the very few whose career has matched its auspicious competition beginnings. He has a formidable profile in Australia where he has worked with the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, West Australia, Tasmania and Canberra Symphony Orchestras, The Queensland Orchestra and Orchestra Victoria, and where *limelight* magazine placed him in their *top 50 power players* to watch in the arts – in the company of luminaries such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Cate Blanchett, and Richard Hickox.

In New Zealand, John has appeared with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Auckland Philharmonia, the Vector Wellington Orchestra and the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. October 2008 sees his debut with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under Zdenek Mácal.

As a chamber musician, John has performed with the Los Angeles, Australian, and Australia Pro Arte Chamber Orchestras. His Suguaro Piano Trio (with violinist Luanne Homzy and cellist Peter Myers) won Bronze at this year's Fischhoff International Chamber Music Competition, the most prestigious chamber competition in the United States.

T'ANG QUARTET Critics have praised Singapore's foremost string ensemble the T'ang Quartet as 'astounding... with such confidence, bravura and charisma that they won the largest ovation of the Tanglewood Festival...' (Boston *Globe*) and for bringing 'enthusiasm, energy and commitment...to all the music...' (The *Times*, London). The Evening *Standard*, London said: 'this ensemble is outstanding. Unanimity of attack is uncanny, and intonation and internal balance both impress greatly. These are plainly minds which share a wavelength'

The T'ang Quartet's debut recording, *The Art of War*, received a rave review from *The Strad* in 2005, and they recorded the soundtrack for *Feet Unbound*, a feature film retracing the Long March as undertaken by teenage girls, directed by Ng Khee Jin

The T'ang Quartet comprises Ng Yu-Ying (1st violin), Ang Chek Meng (2nd violin), Lionel Tan (viola) and Leslie Tan (cello). "T'ang" signifies that golden age of the arts in Asia - the T'ang Dynasty. The name is also an acronym of the players' last names – Ng, Ang and Tan.

GAO PING is one of the most impressive internationally-recognized composers working in New Zealand today. Jack Body has said that Gao Ping is a "total musician, a pianist of great intelligence and sensitivity, an astounding improviser, and a composer whose effortless fluency I envy deeply." Frederic Rzewski said, "Gao Ping is one of a new generation that is breathing new life into the classical tradition. An evening with Gao Ping's music is a true adventure!"

Gao's music has been performed in Europe, Asia, Russia, and across the Americas, and he has received commissions from the United States, Europe and China, including the Zurich-based Ensemble Pyramide, composer/pianist Frederic Rzewski and contemporary music connoisseur Ursula Oppens, violinist Arnold Steindhart, the Starling Chamber Orchestra, Dutch flutist Eleonore Pameijer, the Taiwan National Chinese Orchestra, Cincinnati Chinese Music Society, and the Shenzhen Dance Company. A disc of Gao Ping's music is scheduled to be released shortly on the Naxos label. He was a composer-in-residence at the exclusive MacDowell Artist Colony in the United States.

His work *The Emperor and Nightingale* was premiered at the Aspen Music Festival and his *Concertino for Violin and Strings* was premiered in Beijing and has subsequently met with critical acclaim throughout China and the United States.