

new music concerts presents



# TAN DUN



Melissa  
**HUI**

## NEW MUSIC CONCERTS PRESENTS THE MUSIC OF TAN DUN AND MELISSA HUI

In January 1986 Tan Dun accepted the invitation of Professor Chou Wen-Chung to take up a doctoral fellowship at Columbia University in New York and was introduced to a previously unknown universe of music (and a way of life) long suppressed in his homeland. He was already, at that point, a celebrity in China with a history of awards and controversy. Born in the rustic village of Si Mao in the Province of Hunan, China, on 18 August 1957, Tan's teenage years took place in the midst of the Cultural Revolution of the 1970's. He was just one of many young people sent to help plant rice among the peasants of the Huangjin commune. It was also at this point in his life that his growing interest in music lead him to arrange the folk-songs of the region for whatever instruments were at hand. His skills as a fiddle-player led to a curious twist of fate when he was recruited as the leader of a traveling Beijing opera troupe shortly after a tragic incident in which the boat carrying their members capsized and a number of the musicians drowned.

At the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978, Tan was one of thousands of students competing for one of thirty coveted seats in the newly-reopened composition department of the Central Conservatory in Peking. During his studies there, he composed his first symphony *Li Sao* and was quickly recognised as one of the leading composers of his generation. The Weber prize awarded in Dresden in 1983 for his *String Quartet: Feng Ya Song* was the first such international prize awarded to a Chinese composer since 1949. His reward for this achievement was the imposition of a six-month ban on the performance and broadcast of his music in China by Communist Party hardliners critical of his "*inclination toward Western taste and lack of ideological fervour*". While the fortunes of a composer in China continue to shift with the changing political winds to this day, Tan's continuing residence in New York has seen his music becoming increasingly global not only in spirit and concept, but also in fact. He became the youngest composer ever to receive the prestigious Japanese *Suntory Prize* in 1993 and his compositions have received highly successful performances by major orchestras and ensembles in New York, Helsinki, Tokyo, Edinburgh, Berlin,

Mexico City and Beijing. His music has been described by John Cage as "the presence of sound as the voice of nature...". Tan himself acknowledges the profound influence of Cage as having "led me to discover structures and sounds as yet unknown". Shostakovich, a composer who also lived under a turbulent Communist regime, is credited for having "taught me to express deep human and personal voices", while the works of the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu lead him to the realization that "Western and Eastern instruments can be part of the same colour palette."

Melissa Hui describes her compositional style as "very economical...I don't write many notes. And the more I compose the more economical I become. I really believe that less is best." Ms. Hui was born in Hong Kong, raised in Vancouver, and currently resides in California. She graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor's degree in piano in 1987. Her commitment to composition blossomed through her work at the Banff Centre under the tutelage of Robert Aitken (her earliest ensemble work, *Shadow Play*, was premiered there in 1988) and prepared her to pursue graduate studies in composition at the California Institute of the Arts (M.F.A., 1990) and Yale University (M.M.A., 1992). In the past five years she has garnered an astonishing degree of awards, grants and commissions from the Canada Council, the Banff Centre, CBC, PROCAN (1988), Vancouver New Music (1989), CAPAC (1988, 1989), SOCAN (1991, 1994), the Winnipeg Symphony's Canadian Composers Competition and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble's Composers Forum (1992).

Ms. Hui's new Pittsburgh commission, *Foreign Affairs* (1994), will receive its Canadian premiere under the direction of Robert Aitken, and a recent chamber work, *Solstice*, will also be heard. Tan Dun will appear as both conductor and soloist in his works including *Circle with Four Trios, Conductor and Audience* (1992); *Memorial: 19 Fucks* (1993); *Lament: Autumn Wind* (1993) and *CAGE (fingering for piano)*, (1993).

<p>Both composers will personally introduce their works at 7:15; the concert itself begins at 8:00, Sunday, March 19, 1995 at the <b>Premiere Dance Theatre</b>, Harbourfront Centre. For ticket information please call <b>(416) 973 4000.</b></p>
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# New Music Concerts

**1** Sunday, October 23, 1994  
duMaurier Theatre Centre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Galina Ustvolskaya

**2** Sunday, November 27, 1994  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Norma Beecroft

**3** Sunday, February 5, 1995  
Art Gallery of Ontario  
Walker Court  
Erwin Schulhoff

**4** Sunday, March 19, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Tan Dun/Melissa Hui

Sunday, April 9, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Udo Kasemets

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
The Great Hall at Hart House  
University of Toronto  
Olivier Messiaen

Sunday, April 30, 1995  
Premiere Dance Theatre  
Harbourfront Centre  
Olivier Messiaen

Sunday, May 28, 1995  
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