



CHANNEL OF CHINA

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*Serena
Dances of the Dolls*

Chopin, Poulenc, Liszt, Mozart, Shostakovich a.o.



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Serena Wang

Born in 2004, Serena Wang (Wang Yalun in Chinese) started playing the piano under Sumi Nagasawa at the age of four. In 2010, at age five, she became the youngest prizewinner of the Bach Piano Competition at Berkeley University, and also, as the youngest competitor, the first prizewinner of the Northern California China Music Teacher Institute Piano Competition. The same year, Serena Wang won the gold medal of the Child Group of the 2nd State Juvenile Piano Competition at Gulangyu, Xiamen, China. With the recommendation of Mr. Xu Pei Dong, chairman of Chinese Musicians Association, she started her piano study under the famous piano pedagogue professor Dan Zhao Yi.

In 2011, she was invited to play at Child Spring Festival Gala held by Chengdu TV, and attended the 'Childhood on the Piano black and white Serena Wang Keys' theme concerts held in Chongqing and Hangzhou, which was well received by the audience. She also attended the 'World Champion's Piano Educator – Dan Zhao Yi' series tour concerts, and performed a piano concerto with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra at the National Grand Theater during the 3rd Beijing International Piano Festival.

In 2012, Serena Wang played Kabalevsky's Piano Concerto No.3 with the Qing Dao Symphony Orchestra at the People's Conference Hall of Qing Dao. The same year, together with professor

Dan Zhao Yi, she was introduced to the piano master class of the Jerusalem Music Center and was coached by Arie Vadi, Murray Perahia, Steven Kovacevich, Michal Tal and Yaron Rosenthal. Serena impressed teachers, fellow students and the audience at the gala concert of the master class. Dan's piano teaching method was also very highly spoken of at the master class and his on-spot teaching Israeli piano students impressed both teachers and pianists present.

In 2013, Serena Wang played Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.1 with the Sichuan Music Conservatory Orchestra directed by Zhu Qi Yuan and again the same concerto at the Beijing University Millennium Auditorium and at the Qinghua University New Concert Hall, all with China Philharmonic Orchestra under maestro Yang Yang. All performances garnered standing ovation. The same year Serena Wang played with the Mexican Youth Symphony Orchestra in

Mexico and, back in China, she played the Beethoven Concerto No.1 with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra directed by Yu Long in the Guangzhou Xinghai concert hall. A week later, under the on-spot direction of her teacher professor Dan Zhao Yi, she made her debut recording for international release with Channel Classics. During the recording, the Dutch National Radio and National TV all came to interview her and reported her recording. All visitors to the recording session were amazed and impressed by her extraordinary music talents and the way she communicates through music and with people.

Talent, no matter how big it is, needs careful cultivation. What Serena Wang achieved till now definitely benefits from her teacher professor Dan's methodic, intensive, strict and effective instruction. Serena Wang is just so lucky to have a wonderful teacher who really knows how to cultivate and develop her music talent.

Professor Dan Zhao Yi, Piano Pedagogue, teacher of Serena Wang

Mr. Dan Zhao Yi is a well-known and highly respected piano teacher, piano professor at Shenzhen Music and Art School and guest professor at Sichuan Conservatory of Music, president of Piano Teaching and Research Institute, member of China Musician Association, deputy-chairman of the fourth Musician Association of Guangdong Province, deputy-chairman of Shenzhen Musician Association, vice president of Sichuan Piano Society and honorary president of Shenzhen Piano Society.

Dan Zhao Yi entered the music middle school affiliated to Sichuan Conservatory of Music in 1955, from where he studied the piano under professor He Hui Xian and Lin Rui Zhi. In 1959, he was promoted to the Conservatory as an undergraduate. In the beginning of 1960s, Dan was selected to have further study in Beijing under the well-known piano pedagogue professor Zhou Guang Ren who really laid a solid foundation for Dan's piano playing. Dan Zhao Yi graduated

from Sichuan Conservatory of Music in 1964, where he was invited to stay as a piano teacher until today, known as a prizewinner producing piano professor. During 1960s and 1970s Dan was a very active and popular pianist playing solo recital and chamber music, at the same time he also played in orchestra's as principle timpanist for years. In 1995, Professor Dan Zhao Yi was invited as piano expert teaching selected talented students at Shenzhen Art School. In 2009, he was invited again by Sichuan Conservatory of Music to lead the piano teaching and at the same time teaching at Shenzhen Art School.

Over the last forty years or so, professor Dan Zhao Yi has taught many piano students and quite a number of them won big prizes at major piano competition both home and abroad, winners including now the well-known pianists Yundi Li, Chen Sa, Zhang Hao Chen, who all won top prizes under the age of nineteen respectively at the Chopin International Competition (first prize, Yundi Li), the Leeds Competition (third



Recording session, with professor Dan Zhao Yi

prize, Chen Sa) and the Van Cliburn Competition (first prize, Zhang Hao Chen). All these prizes truly honor the history of piano teaching in China, winning pride and respect for China, highly praised by the Chinese government. Yundi Li and Chen Sa were even given a meeting with the state leaders. Since 2000, more international competition winners were born out of Professor Dan's piano class, such as Zuo Zhang, He Qi Zheng, Xue Xiao Qiu, Gu Jing Dan, Pan Lin Zi and Xu Qi. Just within ten years, professor Dan produced ten prize-winners at various piano competition in China, fifty-nine prizes by twenty-one of his students at international piano competitions, among which twenty-three first prizes and fifty-two top three prizes.

Visiting pianists of prize-winners of Shenzhen Dan Zhao Yi juvenile piano class in recent years have been invited to give concert tours in Europe, Africa, America and other neighboring Asian countries, including giving concerts at China-France Culture Year in Paris, China Culture Festival in USA, Visiting Chinese

Culture Tour in Egypt, Shenzhen Culture Week in Poland and Europe Piano Teaching Yearly Conference in Portugal, all the concerts won standing ovation from the audience and piano teachers and students in the host cities and countries.

In 2006, Shenzhen Young Pianists Group took a national concert tour in fifteen different cities. In each city, Professor Dan offered a piano master class for the local teachers and students, where both the concerts and master classes caused sensation. Dan always encouraged his students to give charity concerts to help the victims of natural disasters and children in poverty stricken regions and areas. The concerts generated millions RMB of Chinese money and really helped those who needed help. Among all the outstanding students, Serena Wang (Wang Yalun in Chinese) is the most conspicuous music prodigy under the direct tutorship of Professor Dan Zhao Yi in the recent three years.

The great achievement achieved in professor Dan's piano teaching work also

invited a lot of prizes made for himself, among which are the Outstanding Culture Worker, Qu Yong Xi Excellent Music Education Award conferred by the Culture Ministry of China and model excellent teacher awards conferred by governments of Sichuan province, Guangdong province and city of Shenzhen, May First Labor Award by Guang Dong government, Well-Cultivated Resident of Shenzhen and Thirty Outstanding Figures of Shenzhen in its city history of thirty years.

In November 2011, a large series

of books titled 'Dan Zhao Yi, Piano Competition Winner Maker' was compiled by Sichuan Conservatory of Music and released by Shanghai Music Publishing House. This series of book sells very well until today and has been popular in the piano teaching world both in China and abroad among Chinese-speaking piano teachers and students. From the books, a clear picture of professor Dan's creative piano teaching method is fully illustrated and his beautiful life as a teacher and great human being is nicely presented.



Recording session, with professor Dan Zhao Yi



Recording session, with professor Dan Zhao Yi and assistant teacher Yi Wen

Many composers, especially from the nineteenth century on, have written piano music for children. Music for children can be of two kinds. It may be intended for children to play, in which case it must be not too difficult in musical content and not too demanding for the young pianist technically. The other category is music for children to hear, when it may make greater demands on a performer, without overtaxing the listener. Both kinds of music are characterized generally by brevity and ease of comprehension, and often by characteristic titles related to fairy tales or songs. The development of the pianoforte as a common domestic instrument, coupled with the literary tendencies of composers in the nineteenth century, led to the creation of a multitude of piano pieces for talented children or for their parents to play for them. Famous examples are Schumann's *Kinderszenen* and *Album für die Jugend*, Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album* and Debussy's *Children's Corner*. This cd offers old and new examples of this tradition, especially from the vast musical repertoire from China.

1 COWBOY PLAYING FLUTE

He Lu Ting

This piece tells a story about a young cow-herding boy who plays the flute extraordinarily well. He is accompanied by his faithful water buffalo, and falls asleep in a tree. Soon he dreams he has lost his buffalo. The dream sequence is delightfully whimsical, beginning with falling leaves that turn into butterflies and gradually lead the cow herder to a beautiful mist-filled valley. Here the

buffalo refuses to budge from his hiding spot, leaving the cow herder to find an alternate musical solution to his problem. The piece was composed by He Lu Ting (1903-1999), who wrote songs for Chinese films beginning in the 1930s, some of them remain popular. At the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, he won a contest in 1934 for his composition *Buffalo Boy's Flute*. In September 1949 he was appointed director of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and he retired in 1984,

retaining the title of honorary director. The main concert hall at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music is named after He Lu Ting.

2 BEAUTIFUL FLOWER IN ITS FULL GLORY

3 GRASSLAND

Dan Zhao Yi (Serena's teacher)

Track 2 and 3 are two of the best-loved Chinese children songs that have been so popular for decades in China. The well-known piano pedagogue professor Dan Zhao Yi transcribed them for piano, very pianistic indeed but still with the childlike quality that attracts children. Transcribing children songs for piano is Dan's trick of stimulating his children students' interest in music, so they will love to stay with the piano to practice and practice.

4 TRAVEL BY BAMBOO RAFT

Fu Gen Chen, arranged by Li Rui Xing

This is a transcription of a popular children's song from a movie made in the 1970s in China; it is about a child

soldier rafting his little boat in search of his dream of finding his father who serves in the army, so he can join the army too. The song is melodious but with nice pianistic challenges.

5-7 IMPRESSIONS OF EIGHT SKETCHES OF WATER PAINTINGS

Tan Dun

Three selections from Impressions of Eight sketches of water paintings Tan Dun (1957), academy-award winning composer, was born in Simao, in the Hunan Province. As a teenager he was sent to a commune to work in the rice paddies, where he played the violin, collected peasant folk songs and music, and became the village's musical conductor. In the late 1970s Tan Dun entered the Central Academy of Music in Beijing and went to the USA for further study, where he launched his music career and achieved great success. Now he is the most popular and the most famous international composer from China. In the three pieces on this cd he returned to the

traditional style of his native culture. This set of Impressions of Eight sketches of water paintings is just like a scroll of Chinese painting, so vivid and expressive. They were played by many pianists quite often and here the eight-year old Serena Wang plays them with a very natural childlike quality that makes these pieces even more communicative and picturesque.

8 DOLLY'S DREAMING (CRADLE SONG, ANDANTE CON MOTTO) OP. 202 NO. 4

T. Oesten

Dolly's Dreaming was written by the German composer Theodore Oesten. He was born in Berlin, played wind and string instruments and studied composition with Böhmer, Rungenhagen, Schneider, and A.W. Bach in Berlin. Oesten is best known for his easy piano compositions, including transcriptions of operatic works, written in the sentimental style of his day.

9-15 DANCES OF THE DOLLS (SUITE FOR PIANO)

D. Shostakovich

Shostakovich's Dances of the Dolls is a suite of easy piano pieces written and compiled in 1953. The Dances are charming miniatures in the style of his Children's Notebook, Op. 69, from 1944. The opening 'Lyrical Waltz' comes from the Ballet Suite No. 2; the next three installments – 'Gavotte Romance', 'Romance Polka' and 'Dance Petite Ballerina' – come from the Ballet Suite No.1; and the last two miniatures, 'Waltz-Joke Hurdy-Gurdy' and 'Waltz Dance', come from the Ballet Suite No. 4.

16-21 VILLAGEOISES, PETITES PIÈCES INFANTINES, FOR PIANO, FP 65

F. Poulenc

- 1 Valse Tyrolienne
- 2 Staccato
- 3 Rustique
- 4 Polka
- 5 Petite Ronde
- 6 Coda

French composer Francis Poulenc made an important contribution to French music in the decades after World War I and many of the songs he wrote are considered among the best composed in the 20th century. Humour remained an important characteristic of his music, as in the Surrealistic comic opera *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (1947), but also in the six fresh pieces recorded here.

22-24 PIANO SONATA IN F MAJOR KV280

W.A. Mozart

The Piano Sonata No. 2 in F major, KV280 (189e) was written down along with other Piano sonatas during the visit Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart paid to Munich for the production of *La finta giardiniera* from late 1774 to the beginning of the following March. Joseph Haydn wrote about his younger colleague and friend, that “posterity will not see such a talent again in 100 years”.

25 LIEBESTRAUM – NO.3

F. Liszt

Franz Liszt loved crafting solo piano transcriptions of lieder, be it by Schubert or by himself. The three *Liebesträume* for piano, the third of which is the famous *Liebestraum* that seems to be on every pianist’s encore list, were in fact published simultaneously as songs and transcriptions in 1850. Liszt’s songs, including these, are unjustly neglected, but the *Liebesträume* – especially the third – never have been. The three *Liebesträume*, which Liszt also called *nottornos* (*nocturnes*, in English), are based on three songs, the third on the song 'O Lieb, so lang du lieben kannst' (1843), with a text by Ferdinand Freiligrath. Its gently arcing six-bar phrases and throbbing repeated notes, and that glowing, completely unexpected modulation to B major after the opening paragraph of music, make this piano transcription a miniature masterpiece.

26 FANTAISIE-IMPROMPTU IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. POSTH. 66

F. Chopin

Frédéric Chopin’s *Fantaisie-Impromptu* in C-sharp minor, Op. Posth. 66 (1834) is dedicated to Julian Fontana, who published the piece in spite of Chopin’s request not to do so. Some aspects of this piece are similar to Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*, which is also in C-sharp minor. Two measures after the

melody begins, an abrupt run up and down has exactly the same notes as the *cadenza* in movement 3 (*Presto agitato*) of that work. The climax on a six-four chord is similar in both pieces. Also, the *Fantaisie-Impromptu*’s middle part and the second movement of the *Moonlight Sonata* are in D-flat major. The first and third movements are in C-sharp minor.



Recording session, with producer and recording engineer Jared Sacks

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**Production**

Channel Classics Records

Producer, recording engineer, editing

Jared Sacks

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Rotterdam**Photography**

Jonas Sacks

Liner notes

Sam Su

Recording location

Hilversum Music Center, Holland

Recording date

August 1-3, 2013

Teacher/coach

Dan Zhao Yi

Assistant teacher/coach

Yi Wen

To watch Serena playing Chopin,
Fantaisie-Impromptu in C-sharp minor
go to www.channelclassics.com

Technical information

Microphones

Bruel & Kjaer 4006, Schoeps

Digital converterDSD Super Audio /Grimm Audio
Pyramix Editing / Merging Technologies**Speakers**

Audiolab, Holland

Amplifiers

Van Medevoort, Holland

Cables

Van den Hul*

Mixing board

Rens Heijnis, custom design

Mastering Room

Speakers

B+W 803d series

Amplifier

Classe 5200

Cable*

Van den Hul

*exclusive use of Van den Hul 3T cables

	He Lu Ting		14	VI	0.40
1	COWBOY PLAYING FLUTE	2.19	15	VII	0.49
	Dan Zhao Yi (Serena's teacher)			Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	
2	BEAUTIFUL FLOWER IN ITS FULL GLORY	0.45		VILLAGEOISES, PETITES PIÈCES INFANTINES, FOR PIANO, FP 65	
3	GRASSLAND	0.46	16	Valse Tyrolienne	0.43
	Fu Gen Chen arranged by Li Rui Xing		17	Staccato	0.49
4	TRAVEL BY BAMBOO RAFT	2.46	18	Rustique	0.54
	Tan Dun		19	Polka	0.30
	IMPRESSIONS OF EIGHT SKETCHES OF WATER PAINTINGS		20	Petite Ronde	0.54
5	Blue Nun	1.11	21	Coda	0.52
6	Staccato	1.36		Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1991)	
7	Sun Rain	1.29		PIANO SONATA IN F MAJOR KV280	
	Theodore Oesten (1813-1870)		22	Allegro assai	3.29
8	DOLLY'S DREAMING, OPUS 202 NO.4	2.11	23	Adagio	4.13
	Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)		24	Presto	2.27
	DANCES OF THE DOLLS (SUITE FOR PIANO)			Franz Liszt (1811-1886)	
9	I	1.56		LIEBESTRÄUME	
10	II	1.39	25	Nocturne no.3	4.46
11	III	2.25		Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)	
12	IV	1.21	26	FANTASIE-IMPROMPTU IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. POSTH. 66	5.32
13	V	2.18			
					Total time 50.00