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Bobby Chen- BIOGRAPHY

Described by International Piano Magazine as: "...an armour-clad player of complete technique, a thinking musician, a natural Romantic. Young bloods come no better", Malaysian Bobby Chen studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Ruth Nye. He burst on the scene in 1996 with a sensational season of concerts, which included a British tour with Lord Menuhin in a performance of Beethoven's Triple Concerto and a recital at the Royal Festival Hall as part of the South Bank Prokofiev Festival.

Chen has performed under conductors Lan Shui, Mathias Bamert, Maximiliano Valdés, Sir Neville Marriner, Pierre-André Valade, Giancarlo Guerrero and with several orchestras including the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Warsaw Sinfonia, Singapore Symphony Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta.

He has recorded for Jaques Samuel Recordings, the 'Cello Classics' label, Illuminate Records, Toccata Classics and SOMM Recordings. He has broadcast live for UK's Classic Fm, Hong Kong's Radio Television Hong Kong and USA's Pianoforte Chicago.

In recent seasons, Chen has performed at Brazil's Musica Nova Contemporary Music Festival, Sweden's Lidköping Music Festival, Ireland's Music for Wexford and Wicklow Arts Festival, UK's Worcester Three Choirs Festival, Guildford International Music Festival and Marlborough College Summer School. Venues he has played in included Beijing's Forbidden City Concert Hall, Dublin's National Concert Hall, Singapore's Victoria Concert Hall, USA's Midland Centre of the Arts, Holland's Hermitage Amsterdam, Poland's Antonin Palace, UK's Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall, Royal Concert Hall, Cadogan Hall, and Wgmore Hall. In addition, The Southern Highlands International Piano Competition organized his Australian début recital in 2009.

In 2007, Chen was picked to give the world premiere of a new piano concerto in London to celebrate Malaysia's 50th Anniversary as a sovereign nation. In 2008, he was one of the pianist selected for the South-East Asian début of the Complete Beethoven Sonatas Cycle in Singapore at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. And in 2009, he represented Malaysia in The Rising Stars Showcase Performances for the 27th Annual Federation of Asian Cultural Promotion (FACP) Conference.

In December 2010, Chen founded the Overseas Malaysian Winter Piano Academy (OMWPA) which took place at The Yehudi Menuhin School in the UK, and which provided high quality music tuition to Malaysian talents. And in March 2011, he was awarded 'The BrandLaureate - Country Branding Award' from The Asia Pacific Brands Foundation. Performance highlights in 2011 included his full début recital at Fazioli Concert Hall in Italy, and his 4th solo recital at London's Wigmore Hall.

Bobby Chen-Reviews

CD

...Chen is an armour-clad player of complete technique, a thinking musician, a natural Romantic. His Schubert positively glows; his boldly projected Haydn impresses for its Michelangeli-like clarity of execution. Petrushka, a marvel of exacting detail and precision attack, triumphs with the best – a powerfully coloured, authentically Russian journey. Nothing seems too difficult, yet nor is anything merely facile. The tension is perfectly gauged. It is so inevitably right that after a while you begin to wonder why everyone doesn't play like this.

Pianist-watchers out for youthful urge and freshness caught on the wing will not want to miss Liszt's Ballade or Franciscan Legends. Mega-high on the wow factor, they scale the awesome...Hearing Chen spur his Fazioli is to experience a distinctive cocktail of weight, balance and onward flow, the medium and its mechanics decisively understood and controlled from within. His arsenal of gran espressione phrases, thunderbolt octaves and basaltic chords quarried from the deep, Arrau/Russian-descended is imperial, his ability to suggest colour and image through touch, timing and dynamic voicing already masterly. Young bloods come no better.

'International Piano' Magazine (Ates Orga)

Concert: 4th solo recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, 30th May 2011

A brilliant evening - but the point about the Wigmore is that it's brilliant several times a week. The previous day I had attended a lunchtime recital in which the Israeli pianist Shai Wosner did thrilling things with Beethoven and Brahms, and an evening concert in which the young Malaysian pianist Bobby Chen made magic with Prokofiev.

The 'Independent' - UK (Michael Church)

*CD: Solo CD for SOMM Recordings (awarded 4 stars ****)*

..star at the Royal Academy, now in his late twenties, he is firmly established on the pianistic scene. He brings out beautifully the pellucid charm of Prokofiev's Second Sonata, but making anything out the awkward Fourth Sonata is beyond even his percussive pianism. The Romeo and Juliet Suite bristles with energy and atmosphere, and Toccata coruscates.

The 'Independent' - UK (Michael Church)

Concert: Sergei Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with Matthias Bamert and Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra

...It's no secret though, that most of the audience was there for Bobby Chen, performing Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. Anyone who may have been dozing during the Prokofiev was sure to have been awakened by his captivating musical skill. His fingers seemed to dance across the keys gracefully, a masterful performance that gave rise to speculations during the interval as to his age. Perhaps that would explain the need for numerous encores and seemingly endless applause, watching poor Bobby repeatedly weave a path around chairs and musicians.

'The Edge' publication – Malaysia (Christal Yeoh)

Concert: Performance with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra

...Chen's touch was masterful, combining the solid, enviable technique of the Russian school with the assured elegance of his Claudio Arrau lineage...(the performance) demonstrated the amazing maturity he is capable of wielding...

The 'Straits Times' – Singapore

Concert: 3rd Solo evening recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, June 2009

The introduction to the 'Pathétique' was very slow, with long pauses, yet there was a beautifully sustained sense of song and the Allegro was light and moderately paced with no slowing for the second subject... 'Soirée dans Grenade' was discretely and very effectively underplayed, with a light spring to the rhythm and a beautifully soft ending.

The Toccata...dangerously fast, the rhythm was electric, Chen totally at ease. In an ideal world, there would have been a touch more devilry, but this was still very exciting. There were no encores; a pity, for having found his feet a couple of extras might have continued to display Chen's gifts to greater effect.

The 'Classical Source' publication - UK (Rob Pennock)

Concert: 3rd Solo evening recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, June 2009

...Chen returned for an all-Prokofiev second half. His accounts of the Ten Pieces from Romeo & Juliet Op.75 and the Op.11 Toccata being on altogether a different level of musical understanding and artistic projection, superbly played throughout and boding well for the success of his new all-Prokofiev CD from SOMM (SOMMCD 089) which includes both works as well as two Sonatas.

The 'Musical Opinion' publication - UK (Robert Matthew-Walker)

CD: Solo Prokofiev CD for SOMM Recordings

...Chen's playing is brilliant and clear, and the famous Toccata, from Prokofiev's earliest compositional period, provides a superb vehicle for a display of his scintillating technique.

In Sonatas Nos. 2 and 4, Bobby Chen brings biting, chattering articulation, particularly aware in the Second Sonata of the music's looking-back at Rachmaninov and Scriabin, and its determination to interrupt those musings with iconoclastic protestations.

The first appearance in any form of Prokofiev's music for the ballet Romeo and Juliet was the suite of ten movements transcribed for piano by the composer himself. It's difficult for us now to cleanse our ears of the fabulous orchestration of this music, but Chen does a marvellous job in selling these piano versions to us...

The 'Birmingham Post' - UK (Christopher Morley)

Concert

...(audiences) were treated to what must be the best recital – piano, certainly, they'll hear this season, with a recital by Bobby Chen...

This is a massive talent...At times, he was carefully thoughtful, at others skittishly lightweight. (Ichiyanaqi's piece, written in 2003) demonstrating Chen's ability to master a modernist's harmonic language with little difficulty.

The 'Liverpool Daily Post' - UK (Glyn Mon Hughes)

Concert: Solo recital as part of the Three Choirs Festival, Huntingdon Hall

...Chen's Debussy playing had matured...Sometimes the layers of sound seemed to merge into one another, then divide again and the florid right hand often sounded like Ravel's Jeux D'eau when the piece evokes fast-flowing water...The Beethoven Sonata, Op. 14, No. 2, Prokofiev's Sonata No. 4, a selection from Visions Fugitives (also by Prokofiev) showed Chen at his best, hardly doing anything wrong. Liszt's Ballade No. 2 was the real find of the recital however, because this had, in the space of one piece, all the assets that we got from the other pieces: passages of contemplation and of bravura. The concert was a tour de force.

The 'Worcester News' – UK (Lucas Bell)

Concert: Rachmaninoff's 2nd piano concerto

...Chen offered a sensitive performance of Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 2." Chen has a solid and fluid technique. He created beautiful singing melodies and crystal clear attention to inner voices. The second movement was the crown jewel of the concerto. Chen's delicate tone became one with the beautiful soft playing of the orchestra...The audience was spellbound and absolutely silent, savoring every note offered...There was an immediate and enthusiastic standing ovation.

The 'Saginaw News' – USA (Gregory H. Largent)

Concert: Solo lunchtime recital at New Walk Museum and Gallery

...the highlight was a dazzling account of Movements from Stravinsky's Petrouchka...Chen truly has (formidable technique)..he gave a virtuoso performance, cleanly articulated, illuminating and dynamic.

...he gave the European premiere of a suite of short pieces by contemporary Chinese composer Zhang Zhao, (Zhao's) five pieces were played with obvious affection.

...a convincing account of the Haydn's Sonata in C Hob XVI:50, Chen brought out the humour and spirit in the inventive opening Allegro and the poetry in the surprisingly weighty Adagio.

The 'Leicester Mercury' – UK (Neil Crutchley)

Concert: Solo evening recital

Bobby Chen's pièce de résistance, Three movements from Petrushka, held a packed house in awe as he unleashed the full range of his formidable artistry...Here Chen's vivid virtuosity accomplished feats of brilliance with an innate sensibility to the underlying plot. His exceptional control and stunning articulation highlighted the composer's genius, garnering rapturous applause.

...Haydn's nimble wit and affectionate grace were infused in Chen's account of the Sonata in E flat, Hob.XVI/49...

The 'Daily Echo' - UK (Mike Marsh)

*Concert: World premiere of Stiletto in the Key of G - Jacqueline du Pre Music Building, Oxford (awarded 5 stars *****)*

Blending in seamlessly are musical numbers...all played with passion and energy by pianist Bobby Chen. In fact, much of the joy of this production lies in the sheer quality of Chen's musicianship. Tying in with the production is an exhibition of Pia's sculptures and paintings...

The 'Oxford Times' – UK

*Concert: Piano trio performance as the Syrius Trio (awarded 3 stars ***)*

The very beautiful individual playing of Elizabeth Cooney, Jane O'Hara and Bobby Chen and their superbly balanced ensemble playing made this work a most interesting, if disconcerting, experience...Exquisitely played, these superbly crafted works are utterly charming. It is hard to imagine a more perfect performance.

Chopin's lightweight, delicious Piano Trio is a joy to the ear.

The 'Irish Examiner' – Republic of Ireland (Declan Townsend)

Concert: Piano trio performance as the Syrius Trio

...the string tone was grainy and vibrant, while the piano balance – so often problematical with these forces – was excellent...The pacing was leisurely, the mood sunny, and rhythmic detail and (especially) dynamics were for the most part finely coordinated...

The 'Irish Times' – Republic of Ireland (Andrew Johnstone)

Concert: World premiere of Tazul Izan Tajuddin's Piano Concerto – Warna Yang Bernada with Pierre-André Valade and London Sinfonietta at Cadogan Hall, to celebrate Malaysia's 50th anniversary as a nation

With its Messiaen-like piano flourishes (vividly played by Bobbie/Bobby Chen) over hazy static orchestral textures, it is attractive...

The 'Guardian' – UK (Andrew Clements)

Bobby Chen-Solo

Repertoire

Bach

Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue
BWV903
Partita No.1 in B-flat Major BWV 825
Partita No.2 in c minor BWV 826
Partita No.4 in D Major BWV 828
Partita No.6 in e minor BWV 830

Bach-Busoni

Toccatina and Fugue in d minor BWV
565
'Awake, the Voice commands' from
Ten Chorale-Preludes
'Now comes the gentiles' Saviour' from
Ten Chorale-Preludes
'Rejoice, beloved Christians' from Ten
Chorale-Preludes
'I call on Thee, Lord Jesus Christ' from
Ten Chorale Preludes

Beethoven

6 Bagatelles Op.120
Sonata Op.2 No.1 in f minor
Sonata Op.2 No.2 in A Major
Sonata Op.2 No.3 in C Major
Sonata Op.13 'Pathetique'
Sonata Op.14 No.1 in E Major
Sonata Op.14 No.2 in G Major
Sonata Op.27 No.2 (Sonata quasi una
Fantasia) 'Moonlight'
Sonata Op.28 in D Major
Sonata Op.31 No.2 in d minor
Sonata Op.53 in C Major 'Waldstein'
Sonata Op.57 'Appassionata'
Sonata Op.81a in E-flat Major 'Les
Adieux'

Brahms

3 Intermezzi Op.117

Britten

Nuttorno (Night Piece)

Buckley

The silver apples of the moon, the
golden apples of the sun

Cant

Turning the Tide

Chopin

Nocturnes Op.9 (No.1,2,3)
Nocturnes Op. 15 (No.1,2,3)
Nocturne Op.27 No.2
Nocturnes Op.32 (No.1,2)
Nocturnes Op.48 (No.1,2)
Nocturne Op.55 No.1
Nocturne Op.62 No.2
Nocturne Op.72 No.1
Ballade No.1 Op.23 in g minor
Ballade No.2 Op.38 in F Major
Berceuse Op.57
Fantaisie Op.49 in f minor
Andante spinto et Grande Polonaise
Brilliante in E-flat Major Op.22
Polonaise Op.40 No.1 in A Major
Polonaise Op.44 in f-sharp minor
Polonaise Op.53 in A-flat Major
Fantasie-Impromptu in c-sharp minor
Etudes Op.25 (complete)
Etudes Op.10 (selection)
Sonata No.3 Op.58 in b minor

Corea

Children's songs (selection)

Debussy

Etudes book 2(complete)
Estampes(complete)
Images book 1(complete)
Feux d'Artifice

Delius

3 Preludes and Toccatina

Ferguson

5 Bagatelles

Foster

Voyages (selection)

Goss

Rough Music

Haydn

Sonata in E flat Hob XVI:49

Sonata in C Major Hob XVI:50

Ichivanagi

Piano Poem

Koechlin

'Sur la Falaise' from Paysages et Marines

'Matin Calme' from Paysages et Marines

'Promenade vers la Mer' from Paysages et Marines

Liszt

2 Légendes S.175

Ballade No.2

'Rigoletto' Paraphrase

'Gnomenreigen' from 2 Concert-Etudes

Paganini-Etudes (No.3,4,5,6)

'Sposalizio' from Années de pèlerinage-Deuxième année: Italie

'Il Penseroso' from Années de pèlerinage-Deuxième année: Italie

Sonetto 104 del Petrarca from Années de pèlerinage-Deuxième année: Italie

'Dante Sonata' from Années de pèlerinage-Deuxième année: Italie

'Ricordanza' from Etudes d'exécution transcendante

'Mazeppa' from Etudes d'exécution transcendante

'Wilde Jagd' from Etudes d'exécution transcendante

4 short piano pieces S.192

Mendelssohn

Variations sérieuses Op.54

Sonata in E-flat Major K282/189g

Sonata in a minor K310/300d

Sonata in A Major K331/300i

Sonata in F Major K332/300k

Sonata in B-flat Major K 333/315c

Sonata in C Major K545

Fantasie in d minor K397/385g

Mussorgsky

Pictures at an Exhibition

Piazzolla

Libertango

Prokofiev

Sonata No.2 Op.14 in d minor

Sonata No.4 Op.29 in c minor

Romeo and Juliet Suite: 10 pieces for Piano Op.75(complete)

Toccata in d minor Op.11

Visions Fugitives Op.22(complete)

Rachmaninov

Prelude op.32 No.5 in G-major

Ravel

Jeux d'eau

Pavane pour une infante défunte

Santiago

Nocturne in e flat minor

Schubert

Impromptus Op.90(complete)

Sonata in a minor Op.164

Fantasia Op.15 'Wanderer'

Schumann

Abegg-Variationen Op.1

Carnaval Op.9

Symphonic Etudes Op.13

Stravinsky

3 Movements from Pétrouchka

Vine

5 Bagatelles

Zhang Zhao

Introduction and 4 pieces in 'Yunnan' Style

Bobby Chen-Concerto Repertoire

Bach

Concerto for Keyboard and strings and continuo in d minor BWV 1052

Beethoven

Concerto No.1 in C Major Op.15
Concerto No.2 in B flat Major Op.19
Choral Fantasia in c minor Op.80

Brahms

Concerto No.2 in B flat Major Op.83

Chopin

Andante Spianato and Grande
Polonaise in E flat Major Op.22

De Falla

'Nights in the Gardens of Spain'

Franck

Symphonische Variationen for Piano and Orchestra

Frances-Hoad

Concerto for solo piano and orchestra (world premiere 2009)

Gershwin

'Rhapsody in Blue'
Variations on 'I've got rhythm'

Grieg

Concerto in a minor Op.16

Mendelssohn

Capriccio Brilliant in b minor Op.22
Concerto No.1 in g minor Op.25

Mozart

Concerto No.23 in A Major K488
Concerto No.27 in B flat Major K595

Rachmaninov

Concerto No.2 in c minor Op.18
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Op.43
Concerto No.4 Op.40

Ravel

Piano Concerto in G

Prokofiev

Concerto No.1 in D flat Major Op.10

Saint-Saëns

'Wedding Cake' Caprice Op.76
Concerto No.5 Op.103 'The Egyptian'

Schumann

Piano Concerto

Shostakovich

Concerto No. 2 Op.102

Tchaikovsky

Concerto No.1 in b flat minor Op.23

Tajuddin

Concerto for solo piano and orchestra (world premiere 2007)

Xian

"Yellow River" Piano Concerto

Bobby Chen-Chamber Music Repertoire

Violin and Piano

Chopin

Nocturne in c-sharp minor -
posthumous

Foster

Ballade for violin and piano

Piazzolla

Le Histoire du Tango

Dwyer

Movimientos I-IV

Beethoven

Sonata No.5 in F Major, Op.24 'Spring'
Sonata No.1 in D Major Op.12

Delius

Sonata for violin and piano No.3

Franck

Sonata in A Major

Ravel

Sonata for violin and piano

Szymanowski

Nocturne and Tarantella

Schubert

Fantasy Op.159

Messiaen

Phantaisie

Mozart

Sonata KV300

Piano Trio

Mozart

Piano trio in B-flat Major Wo039

Beethoven

Trio Op.70 'Ghost'

Brahms

Piano trio no.3 in c minor

Chopin

Piano trio in g minor

Deane

March Oubliee

Frances-Hoad

My Fleeting Angel

Jadassohn

Piano trio no.1

Piano trio no.2

Piano trio no.3

Martin

Piano trio based on Irish Tunes

Mendelssohn

Piano Trio in d minor

Piano Trio in c minor

Piano Trio in B-flat Major

Deane

Marche Oubliée

Rachmaninoff

Trio

Dohnanyi

Piano Trio

Dwyer

PianoTrio No.1 'Quasi una Fantasia'

PianoTrio No.2 'Preludio and

Passacaille'

Schoenfield

Café Music

Piazzolla

4 Porteños

Ravel

Piano Trio

Schubert

Trio in B flat Op.99 D.898

Notturmo

Shostakovich

Trio No.2 Op.67

Repertoire for Cello and Piano**Frescobaldi**

Toccatà

Ginastera

Triste

Klengel

Scherzo in d minor Op.6

Locatelli

Sonata in D Major

Martinu

Variations on a Theme of Rossini

Popper

Dance of the Elves Op.39

Autumn Flowers Op.50 No.5

Happy Recollections Op.64 No.1

Schnittke

Suite in the Old Style

Weber

Adagio and Rondo