

The Chinese Garden

for Xuefei Yang

for solo guitar

Stephen Goss (2007)

- 1 – Jasmine Flower (Mo Li Hua)
- 2 – Red flowers blooming all over the mountain
- 3 – Blue Orchid (Lan Hua Hua)
- 4 – Waterfall Music

This set of four pieces, based on Chinese folksongs, attempts to evoke the peaceful and contemplative atmosphere of a traditional Chinese garden. The selected folksongs exploit flower allegories to reveal their meaning.

The text of *Jasmine Flower (Mo Li Hua)* – a folksong from the Jiangsu region – describes the delicate beauty of the white fragrant jasmine flower. However, the desire to pick just one flower to give to an absent loved one, must be balanced against the fear of angering the gardener, or the thought that the flower will not bloom in the future. Puccini used this melody as a main theme in his opera ‘Turandot’.

Red flowers blooming all over the mountain is a Shanbei folksong from the Loess plateau in the north of Shaanxi province. The text directly reflects the hard lives of the local people. *Blue Orchid (Lan Hua Hua)* – another Shanbei folksong – tells the story of a beautiful girl who is betrothed to a rich landowner but, unable to be with her true love, commits suicide.

The final piece in the set portrays the waterfall in Sydney’s ‘Chinese Garden of Friendship’. Through the sound of the rushing water, echoes of the *Jasmine Flower* melody struggle to be heard before becoming engulfed and submerged.

The Chinese Garden was commissioned by Xuefei Yang for her 2008/09 season of concerts in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The first performance was given at the Wigmore Hall, London, on 16th April 2008. The first broadcast performance was on 14th April 2008, on BBC Radio 3. The piece has been recorded by Xuefei Yang on *40 Degrees North* (EMI Classics 2008) CD 5099920632229 Download 5099920632250.

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“One of the guitar’s finest living composers.”
International Record Review, April 2008

“*The Chinese Garden* is one of the most evocative pieces I have heard since the guitar works of Toru Takemitsu.”
Audiophile Audition, June 2008

“Stephen Goss’s superb *Chinese Garden* is fragrantly evocative.”
Gramophone Magazine, Editor’s Choice, July 2008