

Si (1990)

Ge Gan-ru

"*Si*, for violin, clarinet, and piano, derives its inspiration from the 1989 democratic movement in China and was completed in June, 1990, the first anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre. *Si*, a classical Chinese word, means offering sacrifices to the god or the spirits of the dead. In this piece it reflects not only the composer's deep sorrow for those innocent people who lost their lives in the massacre, but also recollections of the movement.

The piece is in one movement. It begins with an expressive two-note set by the violin and unfolds with the entrance of the clarinet and the low harmonics produced from inside the piano which evoke church bells. Gradually a trill section, evolved from the opening motive, leads to a high point. It is followed by a fast section suggesting the struggle. The middle part is quiet, but graceful with sounds like the *Qin* (the Chinese plucking instrument) as a contrast to the former part. Then, all previous elements are developed until the climax is reached. The whole piece ends very quietly, but its memory of those days will live forever.

Si is dedicated to the Verdehr Trio. It was commissioned by the Trio and funded by a grant from Michigan State University."

—Ge Gan-ru

The world premiere of *Si* was on October 21, 1990 at Brunch with Bach, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan.

Ge Gan-ru (born 1954, Shanghai, China) was China's first *avant-garde* composer. He received degrees in violin and composition from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where he later served as Assistant Professor of Composition. His principal teachers were Chen Gang and visiting English composer Alexander Goehr. In 1983, he was awarded a fellowship to attend Columbia University where he studied with Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidowsky for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He has since worked as a freelance composer in New York.

Gan-ru has composed a variety of music for theater, dance, documentaries, and feature films. His works have been performed by the New York, Brooklyn, Tokyo, and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestras, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, BBC Scotland Orchestra, Florida Symphony Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Kronos Quartet, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Speculum Musicae, Lontano Chamber Ensemble, and Erick Hawkins Dance Company.

Gan-ru has received many commissions and awards from various organizations including Lincoln Center of New York, ASCAP (three times), United States Information Agency, the Pittsburgh International Music Festival, New York Council of the Arts, National Taiwan Academy of Arts, Mid-West Arts Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on Arts, and Detroit Educational Television Foundation (WTVS). He is a Board Director of Meet the Composer. In 1990 he was guest composer at the Composer-to-Composer Conference in Telluride and was also a recipient of a Canadian Foreign Artist Grant.

Gan-ru's music reflects his deep interest in amalgamating Eastern and Western musical aesthetics. "I try," he writes, "to combine contemporary Western compositional techniques with my Chinese feelings and experiences along with Chinese musical characteristics inherited from thousands of years ago, so as to set up a universal musical world expressing natural and primitive beauty."