




The Memories of Boom-Mi-Pon

Kenneth Kuo, Cello

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- 03** The Song of Egrets 4:32
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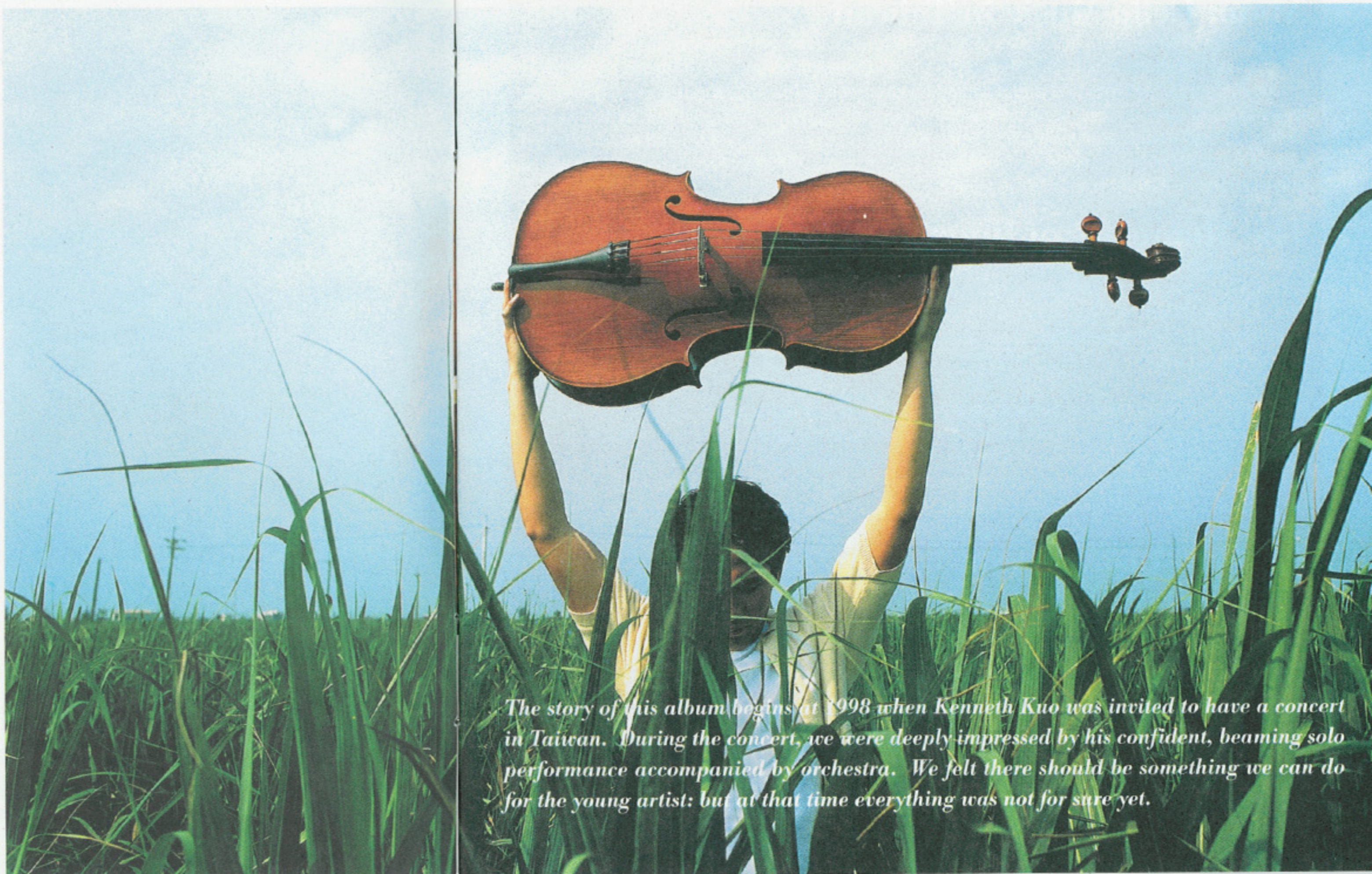
 **JINGO JCD 120004**

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Music and Arrangement by Ed Yen (1-8, 10)
Lyrics from Northern Taiwan Children Song,
Music by Fu-Yu Lin / Ed Yen,
Arrangement by Ed Yen (9)



The story of this album begins at 1998 when Kenneth Kuo was invited to have a concert in Taiwan. During the concert, we were deeply impressed by his confident, beaming solo performance accompanied by orchestra. We felt there should be something we can do for the young artist: but at that time everything was not for sure yet.

About Cello Music in Taiwan

By chance, we realize more about Kuo. After the 921 earthquake, he promoted the music concerts to collect contributions in both Taiwan and the United States; the same kind of music concert was held in Tainan for the retarded and disabled children due to his natural kindness. The young musician, who loves to travel around the world to perform Taiwan ballads, also has Taiwan ballads performed at Carnegie Hall for the first time. Kuo is so attached to Taiwan; and people around him are attracted by his frankness and honesty. Therefore, the thought of producing a "cello album with the motif of Taiwan" comes to our mind.

The Memories of Boom-Mi-Pon

This album expresses only one thing: the genuine concern towards the land. It is a deep gratitude towards our homeland; because of its nourishment, we can grow and thrive. Just like the unforgettable "Boom-Mi-Pon," a kind of Taiwan pop-rice, when it melts in our mouth, the delicious taste reminds us of the memories of our growth. We feel like smiling when we think of the sweet moment of our youth.

In order to add new creativity to the music itself, we specially invite Mr. Ed Yen, who is the only one Chinese producer of Mr. Yo Yo Ma's album, to produce the album. In order to reach his high standard about the music, we spent a lot of time in improving, modifying and communication. To complete all these jobs, Kuo had traveled between Taiwan and the United States for many times. Such traveling exhaustion will easily discourage a person if he does not really love the music.

Taiwan Music Should Be Far Richer Than What We Have Heard Before

We are very glad that this is an album of original works, not simply an album of rearranged Taiwan ballads. Although the production is very time-consuming, we still feel very honored to cooperate with Kuo, an excellent musician. His love towards his homeland and unique performance let our original concepts about the album come true. Enjoy the album of Taiwan's new music; you will feel its energy and optimism. Let us sing the most intimate song, and play the music completely of our own.





"Kuo is an excellent Player, with an effortless technique, a beautiful, warm tone, and a unabashedly romantic soul." -String Magazine

Kenneth Kuo, cello

Born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1974, Kenneth Kuo began his study of the cello at age four. His talent was noticed by American academy; in 1986 he continued his instruction in the United States, studied with Ms. Marion Feldman at the Preparatory School of Manhattan School of Music. During the time Kuo won the First Prize of Teenagers at the Contest of Concerto, and performed with the school's orchestra on stage. He participated in a concert at the Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie next year. After that, he studied under the tutelage of Mr. David Geber, a member of the American String Quartet. At the same year, he was chosen to play at the master class of Janos Starker, a legendary cellist.

In 1993, Kuo entered The Juilliard School in New York, learned cello from professor Harvey Shapiro. When he was there, he performed with many famous chamber musicians, including Samuel Sanders, Eugene Becker, Earl Carllys, and Juilliard String Quartet. After receiving his bachelor's degree from The Juilliard School in 1997, he was awarded a full scholarship to Yale University School of Music to study with Aldo Parisot, a master of cello music. In the graduate school, he became the member of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra in New England. In 1999, Kuo received his master degree from Yale and was awarded the coveted Aldo Parisot Prize in recognition of his stature as "a gifted cellist who shows promise for a concert career."

Kuo won numerous competitions when he was in school. As an international artist, Kuo has been performing as guest soloist on the stages of major concert halls throughout America, Canada, Europe, Australia, Japan and Russia. Favored by the major media, coverage of him has been growing on televisions, radios, newspapers and magazines. Sydney Morning Herald Papers praises Kuo as a "young cellist with full confidence and talents;" and in an interview from San Francisco, the critic deems that Kuo has achieved far beyond his peer.

Kuo plays a cello made by Francesco Goffriller in Venice, Italy, in 1735. This instrument was graciously provided by Mr. Einar J. Holm, the founder of the Ithaca Violoncello Institute.

As a young artist in the field of classical music, Kuo is the model of many teenagers due to his excellence in music and kind personality. He also spends a lot of time and energy in facilitating the music education of teenagers. His faith is fully incarnated in his music school. Kuo not only teaches cello courses there but also invites other great performers to teach in his school. His school provides the chance of entering the field of classical music for students who loves music but do not attend music colleges. Kuo is also the youngest schoolmaster of music school in American history.

Kuo is always concerned about Taiwan. Although he lives in the United States, to go back his homeland and find the valuable materials here is meaningful to him. Through finishing this album, Kuo has completed the first step of his dream for many years.

01 Overture·Seashore of Motherland

When the Portuguese business ship passed by the unknown island accidentally, the sailors yelled excitedly: "Illio formosa!" (it means "beautiful island") The first piece expresses the same exhilaration of our diligent forefathers, when they crossed the sea and discovered the sunny seashore of the abundant island. The topic of cello is introduced by the aboriginal chorus, then followed by the rich and flourishing rhythms, which activate the music and shows the energy and prosperity of the island.

Aboriginal Chorus:

Prelude--adopting from Beinan Race, Mr. Baliwakus' original work "Beautiful Rice Grain."

Middle Episodes--adopting from Tsou Race's traditional ceremonial ballad "Ode to the God."
Theme of lyrics--Here we are, let us praise the God by singing and dancing. May God bless us.

Ending--adopting from Amei Race's opening song in the Year of Plentitude Festival "Mother's Children."
Theme of lyrics--Friends! Let us gather together and sing a song. Mother! Please bring your children here too!

02 The Memories of Boom-Mi-Pon

"Boom-Mi-Pon" is Taiwan pop-rice. The name derives from its Taiwanese pronunciation. During the time when information was insufficient and snack was luxurious food, having a bite of white, puffy and crispy Boom-Mi-Pon could be the most delicious taste in our memory. The booming sound made by the popped rice makers is both frightening and well-expected; but it is still children's most cheerful celebration.

The music tries to convey a sense of happiness, just like the satisfaction derived from eating Boom-Mi-Pon when we were small. To think about it will automatically brings the warm feeling back. The music starts with the low sound effects, as if it is preparing for the surprising sounds of explosion. The background music begins to lead in the funny rhythms of clapping and stamping, catalyzing the music to a more exciting condition, which awakens the purest and the most incomparable happiness within our hearts.

03 The Song of Egrets

The gentlemen-like egrets have slim figures, graceful appearances, and elegant flying poises. Their poetic lightness made themselves become the subject of praise in many literary works.

The soft prelude, performed by the guitar and strings, has the pastoral style of New Age music. The theme of cello enters here fluently and lightly, which outlines the balanced picture of the coexistence of the egrets and the farmers in the green rice field.

When the music goes to end, we add some funny sound effects here. These sounds are farmers' stepping sounds. When the farmers walk into the field to transplant rice seedlings, their feet will sink into the mud and make a hole on the ground. When they pull their feet out, the water around the hole will fill in immediately. Isn't it interesting?

04 Fantasy of Taiwanese Opera

During the time when television was not common, inviting friends to go to night markets together was the most popular leisure activities in summer nights. We could eat, drink and watch plays there. The Taiwanese opera played near the temple's door told the rise and decline of history, the change of our environment and the sadness of past and presence.

The music is adopted from Taiwanese opera melodies. When it starts, we feel the low and sad atmosphere, which is the main characteristic of Taiwanese opera. The following music episodes, combined subtly by cello and er-hu (Chinese string instrument), describe a dramatic troupe that lives a wandering Gypsy life, witnessing the development of Taiwan history but is finally outdated due to the change of time and environment.

05 Nocturne·The Dance of Fireflies

The fireflies are the night elves. Maybe because they are shy, they yield the day to the others; maybe because they are quiet, they go out for fun together in the silent night; and maybe because they love companions, they light up the conspicuous fire in order to let others know that they are here.

No matter how dark the night is, the fireflies determine to have a big meeting in summer night. Either to call their friends, or to woo and attract the female, the fireflies cast a mysterious color over the country night.

The flickering rhythms and the mysterious style of the prelude depicts the weird image of the fireflies floating and gathering in the night. The alluring and decadent cello stimulates the spirit of Tango implicit in the music. Till the end, two cellos open up an improvised game of interplaying, which entails the vague atmosphere developed earlier.

06 Sugarcane Melody

In November, the weather in Southern Taiwan is still very hot. The slim sugarcanes are eager to declare that the harvest season has arrived. The farmers walk into the field and bend down to harvest. After mowing, the farmers eat and chew the sugarcanes. When they taste the sweet juice, the farmers' dark faces show the happiest expressions.

The music describes the farmers' optimistic and working attitude. It starts with the old radio playing the nostalgic Taiwan melody. Drum and cymbals are added to create the climax. You can imagine that there is an elementary school band; and the children over there are playing the instruments proudly. Another music scene of train carrying sugarcanes shifts here, leading the audience to trace their history of growth.



07 Bicycle Days

Many people had the experiences of riding adult's bicycles when they were small. Due to the short legs, we often failed to reach the pedals, thus causing many awkward and funny riding poises. Accidents are inevitable under such circumstances, like the one imitated in the end of the music. Even so, we still love to ride bicycles because we really enjoy riding bicycles to school with our friends.

The easiness of riding and humming at the same time is described here. The cello high overtones remind us of the noisy sounds when riding old bicycle; and the steady movements of riding bicycle are imitated by the cello rhythms. Please listen carefully to the delicate arrangement here, you will find the various styles are represented mostly by only one cello. An effect of cello ensemble is created here, just like the kaleidoscope, which brings us a different feeling of hearing through the combinations of voices.

For professor Chi-Mei Wang from composer Ed Yen

08 Mysterious Sika Deers

The mysterious sika deer is a legend itself. The creator gives them beautiful fur skin, spiritual eyes, and elegant antlers, but all these gifts also bring them a fatal disaster. During the time when Taiwan was still a primitive island, the sika deers bred here, generation after generation, letting Taiwan enjoy the name of "The Land of Deer." But due to a series of slaughters, more and more deers were dead Finally, according to the records, the wild sika deers were extinguished in Taiwan in 1969.

The music plot begins in the foggy deep mountains; in the dream-like setting, the last group of sika deers shows up. Then the cello's sad motif comes out, telling the story that although we are lucky to meet the deers, it is just a glance of vague shadows in the gray woods. Near the middle section of the music, the rhythm becomes light, the image of the deers' jumping, playing, and searching food in the far distance is revealed. Finally, we feel lost when the last deer is gone. The music fades gradually in the mood of sadness.





09 Murky, Murky Sky

The thundershower in midsummer's afternoon is like the chivalrous but impatient musketeer. Suddenly the dark clouds gather together, and it begins to thunder and rain, so quickly and overwhelmingly that nobody is able to make preparations for the thundershower. The thundershower, however, comes and goes quickly. After the rain stops, the sky is still blue and the sun shines again; it seems that nothing happened before, except the wet and cool ground.

The music, adopted from the familiar ballad "Murky, Murky Sky," is extended from the original melody. The xiao (Chinese pipe) music imitates the thundering and prepares the tension before storming. Before the main melody comes out, we hear two cellos competing to play vehemently; the music is touching that we have to hold our breath, because it rains so abruptly and heavily. The following music moves forward swiftly and energetically in the grand animation. The recomposed music episode of Adagio, echoed by the aboriginal chorus, represents the extreme beauty and tenderness of cello music, conveying another beautiful sentiment when the rain stops.

Aboriginal chorus are adopted from Mr. Baliwaku's work, Beinan Race's "The Blessing."

Theme of lyrics--We are saying good-bye to our friends, because every party has to end. Let us cherish our friendship; take care of yourselves and wish you have a wonderful trip.

10 The Blessing

This piece is the album's last track, which expresses the reluctance of saying good-bye. Echoing the first track, the music unfolds itself in the ocean's waving sounds again. The wind bells are added to create the sad atmosphere: being apart in such a long distance, and we do not know when to see each other again.

Just like the song of farewell in elementary school's graduation ceremony, the cello conveys both the sadness and the warmth; besides that, the cello extends the heartfelt regards to our people. We sincerely present "The Blessing" to Taiwan people and everyone here.



Deep in my heart, I'm a Taiwanese for sure.

During recording, I came to realize more about my music and myself. Although I have been living in America from the age of eleven, there has always been a question in my mind, "Am I an American cellist or a Taiwanese cellist?" Through this project, I began to realize that deep in my heart, I'm a Taiwanese for sure. So when you listen to the music, you might hear a cellist telling you stories about his homeland, Taiwan.

The first piece "Overture•Seashore of Motherland" reminds me of my first return to Taiwan ten years ago. I found it tremendously exciting. I was a bit nervous because I became unfamiliar with almost everything here. However, in just a few days, I was totally adopted. To me, the music reminds me of the strange yet familiar experiences of the moment when I just returned here.

One of the most memorable experiences of my childhood was the smell of fresh "Boom-Mi-Pon" coming from the street side. I had to practice a lot, but when I heard the popped rice makers made the explosive "booming" sound, I knew that the "Boom-Mi-Pon" was done and it was time to take a break. Therefore, when the producer introduced me to the "The Memories of Boom-Mi-Pon" score, I fell in love with it right away - the music grabbed my soul as if I were the happiest little kid on the block. I hope you could feel how much I enjoyed playing it.

In my childhood memory, the characters and music of the Taiwanese opera was especially attractive to me. Ed and Eric explained to me that the musicians had to travel from town to town to put on these shows. It was really hard and difficult to them. I can well understand their loneliness and their dedication to their roles. I tried to express the mood when interpreting "Fantasy of Taiwanese Opera."

I remember when I was a child, I went to school in Hsin-Chu every day by riding bicycle. I would meet my companions on the way to school, and we always showed up there as a "bike gang." In "Bicycle Days" we used multiple cellos - as many as twenty - to create the image of a gang. It was hard to do that at first, but it was a lot of fun recording it.

I also heard the original music of "Murky, Murky Sky" when I was young. I really like the new arrangement here. The song not only describes the funny scenes of raining but also transforms itself into a huge storm.

The last piece, "The Blessing" is probably my favorite song. I remember the day when I went to the airport, leaving for America to study for the first time, not knowing when I would be back. All I had was blessings from my family. Both my family and I cried. When I was recording this piece, it was very hard to hold back my recollection and my tears. Thanks to Ed, the piece was beautifully written and I am happy to share it with you.

This recording means so much to me, not only because of the beautiful music but also the memories of my childhood it evokes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this project. Their understanding has provided me tremendous assistance. Their inspiration made it all possible for me to complete this wonderful album.




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Xiao / Di-Zi: Chun-Shien Chen
Er-Hu / Dai-Guang-Xian: Walter Fan
Guitar / Piano: Ed Yen
Strings Dubbing-
Violins / Violas: Eric Wang
Cellos: Kenneth Kuo
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