

Su Lian Tan is simply one of my favorite composers. Not because she is an awesome person (she is), but because she channels amazing music. Su's music is that very rare combination of beauty, accessibility, sophistication, surprise, real depth, provocativeness and most of all, connection to the listener's soul. As my musician-wife put it when she heard "Ming" for the first time, "I didn't think anyone wrote music that beautiful anymore!"

The whole CD came together very last minute, as I started recording 3 days after I decided to do the CD. A free date had opened up in one of the halls, and I decided to make my first solo CD in a decade (after many recordings with my own group and Canadian Brass). So all these ideas that had been ruminating for years started flowing in as I was gathering together these amazing pianists to record with me. Everyone was initially unavailable until somehow holes started appearing in their schedules that exactly matched the very limited hall and engineer availabilities. It was really an unbelievable confluence of circumstance that I can't even begin to explain.

I called Su, basically begging her to write a piece, and she graciously (and enthusiastically) consented. An unheard of 2 1/2 months later, we had the first (of two) movements in hand. Su rushed her copyist, and 3 days later (sensing a theme here?) we recorded it. As with the rest of the CD, there was no rehearsal, just figuring things out in the session. I think Su would agree that while the last-minute nature brings some stress, it also often brings out the best in creative types (see Twyla Tharp's book for more on this).

To my ears, "Ming" is unparalleled in the trumpet repertoire. Su brings her personal style amidst echoes of Debussy and Rachmaninoff. The piece is based off her impressions of seeing the intricate arts adorning Ming-era vases, especially the calligraphy. For me it's gorgeous melodies set within captivating structures of sounds that haunt and intrigue at the same time. She has put the trumpet as the main character in a very expressive, soul-grabbing journey through the depths of spirit. If this sounds elusive, my apologies. It would take a true poet to just hint at Su's music. So, with that admission, I encourage you to experience it for yourself!

— Joe Burgstaller