

## ***MEI-ANN CHEN***

*Conductor*

### **SELECT PRESS ACCLAIM**

"But above all, the conductor Mei-Ann Chen should have all the honor of the overwhelming impression "Terra nostra" made. Along with a slightly reduced, yet sounding HSO, she took the audience by storm. It was a very long time since such a newly written work in this format was received with such great enthusiasm."

With the Helsingborg Concert Choir, the Gothenburg Cathedral Girl Choir and the St. Eriksolisterna. Mei-Ann Chen, conductor. Helsingborg Concert Hall 13/10.

— Helsingborgs Dagblad

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NDR Radio Philharmonic on Gut Varrel Of courage and music

Women and their courage were the focus of the Niedersächsische Musiktage in the barn Varrel. Works by two women were heard, and two other women were actively involved....For there were only a few women in the past centuries who had the courage to assert themselves as composers and other creative artists in the art scene. These included two practically present ones on Thursday evening - and two whose works were heard.

The two composers who belonged to these latter were Anna Thorvaldsdottir (born 1977) and Clara Schumann (1819-1896). Present in special positions were again the other two courageous, namely conductor Mei-Ann Chen on the rostrum of the NDR Radiophilharmonie and the pianist Lise de la Salle. Together with the famous orchestra, a total of three works were intoned.

...The "Hrim" by Icelander Thorvaldsdottir, written in 2009, was the beginning of an unusual kind. ...the ears enjoyed spherical sound-worlds between chirping, whispering and wing-beating, sometimes darker shadows.

...Clara Schumann Piano Concerto No. 1 in A minor op. 7,... ...What followed was simply mind-blowing. ...

...Symphony no. 2 in C major op. 61 by Robert Schumann was like an intoxicating party, sometimes with more gentle nuances. ... a spirited conductor whirled and made for excitement in the well-visited Gutsscheune. Long applause and many cheers rounded off the two-hour concert experience." (Translation)

— Weser-kurier (Germany)

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[Kapellimestari löysi Amerikasta yllättävän harvinaisuuden – Tampere Filharmonian](#)

"Chen LED with clear language, rhythm and lovely positive energy. The Orchestra responded to the dance of the conductor with desire and inspiration." (translation)

— Harri Hautala, AAMULEHTI

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"Mei-Ann Chen leads the Sinfonietta in propulsive performances of all six works. There's more than enough rhythmic energy to go around but these aren't simply muscular readings: the Price, Esmail, and Higdon scores are craftily phrased, while the Assad and Montgomery works gambol amiably. In all, then, this is a timely and inviting winner of an album."

— Jonathan Blumhofer, Artsfuse.org

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"This is the most exciting, high-energy orchestra I've listened to this season, the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra on April 27, 2019. The concert was titled "Spanish Elegance" but two of the composers were French, only one was Spanish. It was a natural result of the mutual/reciprocal artistic engagement between France and Spain.

Taiwanese-American female conductor Mei-Ann Chen (b.1973) is an energetic conductor who cannot stand still, and communicates with the orchestra using big and small hand gestures. French composer Emmanuel Chabrier's (1841-1894) after his visit to Spain, wrote *Espana*, a concerto influenced by the Spanish melodies and dances of his travels. The eagerly awaited cellist Andreas Brantelid (D. 1987) came from Spain for Eduard Lalo's (1823-1892) *Cello Concerto in D Minor*. One of the North's top cellists, In Lalo's concerto, we witnessed a 31-year-old with a great deal of maturity. ... His 1707 "Boni-Gegar" Stradivarius had great influence on his high-tech technique, adding to his great artistry.

...

In the second half of the concert we heard the first of Joaquin Turina's (1892-1949) two Spanish suites, composed of three dances titled *Danzas fantasticas*, followed by George Bizet's (1838-1875) edited version of *Carmen*, the most popular opera in the world. The conductor led the orchestra with a snappy mobility, applauding all groups one by one, always applauding to the audience. Honestly, they all deserved applause. "

Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, April 27, 2019

— Sefik Kahramankaptan, Sanattan Yansimalar

Review: Shaub, Chen, and KSO Combine for An Evening of Symphonic Delights

"As if the Mendelssohn concerto needed more energy last weekend, guest conductor Mei-Ann Chen was on hand to lead that orchestral accompaniment to Shaub's engaging take. Chen literally radiates energy from the time she walks on stage, that energy becoming precision and passion from the first downbeat. And, importantly, she clearly has a finely tuned sense of what requires prominence and what requires collaboration.

...

Using various pieces from incidental music that Weber composed for a play based on the *Turandot* story, Hindemith brightened the colors and expanded the sonic appeal, adding substantial depth and interest. Chen submerged herself in those textures and in that depth—sans score—muscling the sections of orchestral sound about as paint on a palette. The second movement, the *Turandot Scherzo*, was electric and mindboggling, pulling jazz colors from the KSO brass and winds. Chen brought the *Andantino* third movement down to lyrical earth and to a degree of strange gentleness, saving up power and sonic strength for the deliciously eccentric, exuberant, and rambunctious finale *March* that was executed with perfection.

— Alan Sherrod, ArtsKnoxville

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Tonal Evolution: Great New Music That Makes Room for Tunes

"Debates about new music have always focused mainly on styles that have caught listeners off guard. ...But the best of this music is almost always more than a prefix suggests. ...Nor is it about to vanish, as several new releases offering works by composers born in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, make clear. River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO), a flexible chamber orchestra based in Houston, has devoted its debut recording, *Visions Take Flight* (Innova, 2 CDs) to six recent neo-Romantic scores. They are all steeped in tonality and built, at least partially, on traditional structural models, but they are also different enough that their composers' thumbprints shine through."

— Allan Kozinn, San Francisco Classical Voice [Related Link](#)

### Classical Music CD Review: ROCO's "Visions Take Flight"

"All of the performances, led with elegant command by Mei-Ann Chen, may as well be considered definitive. ROCO plays with terrific technical command, certainly, but also with a real sense of style and abandon. Just listen to the blazing colors of the Al-Zand, or the biting rhythms of Teen Murti, or the manic glee that marks parts of Jabberwocky and try not to get drawn in.

Actually, don't do that. Just give in. After all, Visions Take Flight is one of those rarest of accomplishments: a contemporary music album that's a sheer joy to listen to, from start to finish. Those come along, well, pretty rarely."

— Jonathan Blumhofer, Artsfuse.org

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### Visions Take Flight: ROCO Impresses with Debut Album of New Music

"Visions Take Flight begins with Al-Zand's Visions from Another World (2008), an apt choice to introduce the capabilities of the ensemble. In the playful first and third movements, lively, simple melodies are passed around the instrumental families of the orchestra, which plays with energy and precision under the direction of conductor Mei-Ann Chen. ... there's more than enough substance to make Visions Take Flight an impressive debut. It is unusual to see an orchestra of any size make its first recorded statement a collection of new music, let alone all self-commissioned works. The performances throughout are full of verve and musicality, and the technical quality of the recordings is excellent."

— Jeffrey Young, I Care If You Listen

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### ROCO: Visions Tak Flight CD Review

"There's one reason in particular why Visions Take Flight, the double-CD debut release by ROCO, the Houston-based River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, nabbed the number nine slot in textura's 2018 list of top classical releases. It's not because the performances are stellar, which they are, and not because the ensemble plays magnificently, which it does. No, it's because when ROCO selected works to include on the release, the musicians selected their favourite pieces from the group's repertoire and the five chosen from the then fifty-eight available (the total now seventy-five) constitute an incredible sampling of material by living American composers. It's this that recommends the release most, though the realizations by the ensemble, conducted by Mei-Ann Chen, are as impressive. "

— textura

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### Review of ROCO: Visions Take Flight

"A flexible, large ensemble that plays to the manor born, even when performing recent commissioned pieces, it's modern classical music without artifice when it boils things down to the chops that really matter. Delightfully played, this is a set for moldy figs and newbies to enjoy together without quibble. Well done."

— Chris Spector, MidWest Record

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Review: Superstar pianist Lang Lang energizes sold-out Symphony Hall crowd

"Chen and the ASO followed with Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550, the middle child among his three final symphonies, all written within a matter of weeks during the summer of 1788. The Serenade and the Symphony were approached in a rather muscular way, evidenced both by sound and Chen's conducting gestures. That character was enhanced by the use of a large complement of strings, rather than one more consistent with the 18th century in size. But it was most evident through Chen's vigorous, robust approach to the music, particularly to shaping phrases. This energy propelled the Symphony No. 40, and Chen's understanding and handling of the opening bars of the first movement paid ode to the approach taught to many of us by Leonard Bernstein in one of his television broadcasts about the piece."

— Mark Gresham, ArtATL

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Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Lang Lang

"The program was a kind of 'Mozart's Greatest Hits'. Eine kleine Nachtmusik was given a sparkling performance. Sometimes being a guest conductor can ignite a fire in an orchestra and there was no doubt that Ms. Chen lit one here; she infused a new energy into the orchestra's performance. In the first movement Allegro, the violins were silky and performed with a refined lightness and outstanding ensemble. The basses, too, were energetic, powerful and precise. The languorous Andante was polished and sounded intimate, in spite of the large number of strings employed. Ms. Chen chose a slightly brisk tempo for the Allegretto. By the Allegro finale, Chen had set expectations for tight dynamics and precise entrances, and she delivered. The ASO strings provided a winning execution of this familiar favourite; lean, smooth and with beautifully sculpted dynamics. ... The Allegretto [of Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 24 in C minor] was bold; Chen and Lang were in lockstep in extracting the beauty, creativity and energy of the finale."

— William E. Ford, Bachtrack

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Chicago Sinfonietta celebrates the American immigration experience in Boyer's up

"...the orchestra played with great polish and commitment under Chen who deftly handled the alternating spoken and musical elements with clear stop-and-go cues.... The Danzon No. 2 by Arturo Marquez has become the Mexican composer's sole repertoire piece to such an extent that one sometimes wonders if there really is a Danzon No. 1. Chen led a worthy performance of this overplayed work, bringing idiomatic lilt to the tango-like opening theme and syncopated bite to the ensuing dances, leading the music in her own Terpsichorean manner."

— Lawrence Johnson, ChicagoClassicalReview.com

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Santa Rosa Symphony

"Chen is diminutive but powerful, with an exacting style of conducting that commands attention."

...

"Chen displayed almost everything you could want from a conductor: musicality, confidence, wonderful technique, and restless enthusiasm." (Santa Rosa Symphony)

— Steve Osborn, sfcv.org

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Santa Rosa Symphony

"Her controlled yet fluid conducting style combined clear cues and beats with sweeping, circular gestures reminiscent of the great maestro Seiji Ozawa." (Santa Rosa Symphony)

— Diane Peterson, The Press Democrat (CA)

Conductor Mei-Ann Chen Elicits Impressive Work From Symphony Silicon Valley  
“a vivid and energetic conductor”

— David Bratman, sfcv.org

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Guest Conductor Mei-Ann Chen Leads a Joyous KSO Through an Inspired and Eclectic  
“The evening’s diverse program took yet another turn with the concluding work: Igor Stravinsky’s 1919 Suite from The Firebird, music drawn from the composer’s first ballet collaboration with the Ballet Russes in Paris. It was in this magical, fairy-story work that one recognized Chen’s ability to plumb the depths of an orchestra’s potential and inspire joy and energetic performance from the players.”

— Alan Sherrod, Knoxmercury.com

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Malmö Symphony Orchestra

“The performance indeed offered a captivating and inspired interpretation.” (translation)

— Carlhakan Larsen, sydsvenskan.se

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Charlotte Symphony

"Taiwanese-born conductor Mei-Ann Chen... drew a richly romantic sound from the orchestra. ...The program began with Mozart’s overture to “The Magic Flute” and ended with Schubert’s Fourth Symphony. Chen conducted all of it with weight, precision and an intensity that sometimes became breathless."

— Lawrence Toppman, Charlotte Observer

Grand Rapids Symphony

"Grand Rapids Symphony's Classical Series concert, which repeats tonight, isn't easily explained. But it was exciting to experience. In part, that's due to the popularity of music by Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. But mostly it's due to the incomparable Time for Three as guest artists and to the irrepressible Mei-Ann Chen as guest conductor. ... Chen... was a colorful, even flamboyant, conjuror of sounds and crafter of textures. The orchestra clearly was having a good time."

— Jeffrey Kaczmarczyk, mlive.com

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Sarasota Orchestra presents tour de force under guest conductor Chen

"The deeply-resonant opening chords [of Rimski-Korsakov's Scheherazade] contrasting the near transparent pianissimo wind chords that followed stand as a simple testament to the extreme capabilities of these musicians. What seemed simple at first carried through the musical and technical demands of the entire work. The string tone, magnificent in the lush romantic melodies, was coupled with excellent solo turns by all the winds and brass. By the conclusion we were spent by Chen’s exhilarating tempos of the tour de force performance."

— Gayle Williams, Herald Tribune (Sarasota, FL)

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Review of Delights and Dances

"This album contains three twentieth century works for string quartet and orchestra in the baroque concerto grosso tradition: where a smaller ensemble (here the string quartet) is contrasted with a larger ensemble – the orchestra. ...Delights and Dances lives up to its title...  
...Benjamin Lees (1924-2010) Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra (1964) is a more

serious and modern work. ...This is an exhilarating and significant American concerto, and the Harlem Quartet and Chicago Sinfonietta play it for all it's worth. Chinese composer An-Lun Huang's Sabei Dance is a crowd-pleasing four-minute work whose oriental lyricism clears the palate and prepares the listener for conductor, composer and arranger Randall Craig Fleischer's West Side Story Concerto. ...the performance and recording of Fleischer's arrangement is superb.... ... the whole album is easy to enjoy."

— John Sunier/Robert Moon, Audiophile Audition

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Mei-Ann Chen makes an auspicious CSO debut

"But like the Sultan's wife who heads off her own death by telling her husband wondrous tales for 1,001 nights, Chen worked some enchantment of her own on the CSO Thursday night. Often performed as a mixture of overly perfumed lyricism and ersatz exoticism, Sheherazade became something much more powerful and intimate. Setting a deliberate rather than rhapsodic pace throughout the work, drawing pristine yet expressive phrasing from the orchestra, Chen transformed the story.

Without losing any of her mysterious aura, Sheherazade became a cool-headed beauty, a worthy adversary to the mighty sultan. Passions ran high in the stories she told. But this self-possessed young woman was smart enough to keep a tight rein on her own passions, which made her all but irresistible. ...Chen's blending of orchestral forces was equally deft in Mendelssohn's overture, which runs from sunny evocations of a dappled, free-flowing river to darker eruptions."

— Wynne Delacoma, ChicagoClassicalReview.com