

CELEBRATE ASIA COMPOSITION COMPETITION SELECTION

World premiere: January 14, 2011

HUANG RUO

The Yellow Earth for Sheng and Orchestra

Hu Jianbing, sheng

Carolyn Kuan, conductor

The Yellow Earth by **Huang Ruo** (b. 1976), which receives its West Coast premiere tonight, employs the 1,000-year-old Chinese sheng, a hand-held reed instrument with many small vertical pipes. It is considered to be the Eastern ancestor of the Western organ. It has a plaintive tone, with a timbre that is similar to both the Latin American bandoneón and the harmonica. The modern sheng contains 37 bamboo pipes, ranging from G below middle C, up to G above the treble clef — four complete octaves with every chromatic pitch in between. *The Yellow Earth* is the third movement of Ruo's concerto, *The Yellow Color*. The composer has kindly provided the following comments:

"Its title *The Yellow Earth*...is a symbolic term referring to the land of China since ancient times. In the code of the five elements, the earth has a carrying, supporting function, and thus also assumes the function of primary source and nutrition: the plants sprout from the earth, from where fire, too, breaks out; metals are extracted from its mines, and water flows from its wells. The earth is the center — the color yellow; its taste is sweet and its aroma is that of perfume. Mankind as the yellow race, the inhabitants of this world, stems from this equivalent....The music in this work is sincere, earthy, yet also celebratory. The solo sheng acts like a traveler, who journeys on the land of the yellow earth. Its path is also like a mirror, which reflects whatever views it captures."

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