

EMEC, E-097, JIANG WENYE BAGATELLES, Cello and guitar

Welcome to the Far East! Jiang Wenye (or should it be the other way around?) (1910-83) was born in Taiwan, grew up in Japan, and moved to China along with Alexander Tcherepnin in 1936, who encouraged him to write these Bagatelles for piano. What we are hearing now is a transcription by the guitarist, who is also responsible for the anonymous Chinese material included here. So this is a program of miniatures; only two pieces are longer than three minutes. The cellist is not as accurate in intonation as one might hope, but one only notices this occasionally, and the guitarist is excellent in variety of sound as well as technique.

The music is quite lovely. The folk settings are more interesting than they are absorbing musically, but Jiang's Bagatelles are full of imagination and variety. The general mood of all of this material is not as harmonically active as we are accustomed to. One does get a little tired of the prevailing pentatonic atmosphere. Still, it is an unusual concept and by no means unpleasant. © 2014 American Record Guide