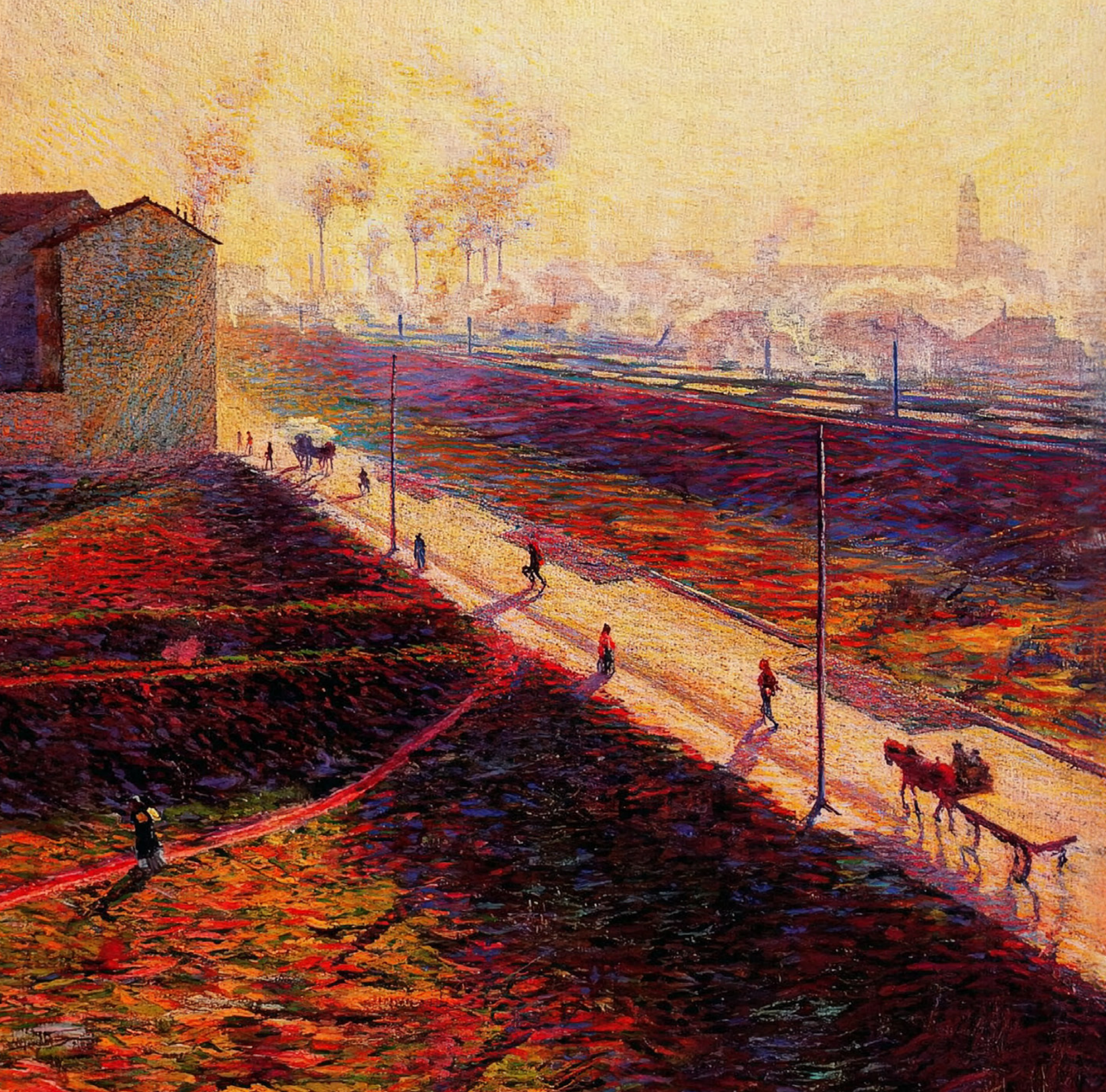
John Williams *Flute Concerto*
Bernard Herrmann *Souvenirs de Voyage*

JIN TA · MA YUE
SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
DARRELL ANG · JOSHUA TAN



Album and booklet cover
Umberto Boccioni, ***The Morning***, 1909

Digisleeve
Joseph Mallord William Turner, ***Approach to Venice***, 1844

For Hans Sørensen (1963 – 2026)
Orchestra programmer, record producer, arranger, music lover, friend

As the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's Head of Artistic Planning from 2019 to 2025, Hans regularly went the extra mile to locate, restore and even score lost, neglected treasures in music, such as Kozłowski's *Requiem* and Bill Evans's *Symbiosis*. During his tenure, Hans also produced every Chloe Chua album on PENTATONE, nurturing the Singaporean violinist to international stardom. The music world is dimmer with his passing, but his legacy will come alive whenever you press "Play".

© Leon Chia

John Williams (b. 1932)

	Concerto for Solo Flute, Strings, & Percussion (1969)	
1	I. Moderato – Poco meno e calmando	3. 43
2	II. Cadenza	1. 43
3	III. Andante – Cadenza	4. 48
4	IV. Allegro	4. 03

Jin Ta, flute
Singapore Symphony Orchestra · **Darrell Ang**, conductor

5	**Essay for Strings (1965)**	10. 20

Singapore Symphony Orchestra · **Joshua Tan**, conductor

Bernard Herrmann (1911–1975)

	Clarinet Quintet – *Souvenirs de Voyage* (1967)*	
	adapted for Clarinet and String Orchestra by Hans Sørensen (2021)	
6	I. Lento. Molto tranquillo	13. 04
7	II. Andante. Berceuse	7. 34
8	III. Andantino. Canto amoroso	8. 26

Ma Yue, clarinet
Singapore Symphony Orchestra · **Joshua Tan**, conductor

Hugo Friedhofer (1901–1981)

	Wind Quintet – Suite for 5 Woodwinds (1973)*	
9	I. Lento sostenuto	2. 05
10	II. Scherzando	0. 52
11	III. Lento ben sostenuto	1. 25
12	IV. Alla marcia solonelle	0. 31
13	V. Moderato poco mosso	1. 13
14	VI. Mosso e ritmico	0. 47
15	VII. Tranquillo	0. 55

Jin Ta, flute
Rachel Walker, oboe
Ma Yue, clarinet
Christoph Wichert, bassoon
Marc-Antoine Robillard, horn

Total playing time: 61. 48

**World premiere recording*

Joshua Tan

© Bryan van der Beek

With many modern orchestras programming a varied range of genres from video game music to film scores performed live to picture, it may seem odd to consider that there was a time when such cross-pollination was at best rare and at worst positively frowned upon, not least when it came to "film composers" who dared to write works for the concert hall. While this snobbery may have conveniently forgotten that traffic was frequently allowed to flow the other way (with the likes of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Walton, Copland, Korngold, and even Saint-Saëns lending their services in varying degrees to the motion picture industry), it may not be considered too much of a generalisation to assert that in decades past it was much harder for composers known primarily for their cinematic output to gain a respected foothold in the realm of concert music.

Two composers who unquestionably succeeded in bridging this chasm are John Williams and Bernard Herrmann. For Williams, 1965 marked a significant turning point in this respect. Aside from a handful of unpublished student pieces such as a Piano Sonata and a Wind Quintet, it was in this year that he began to dip his toe into the world of "serious" music, with March seeing the first performance of his jazzy *Prelude and Fugue* given by Stan Kenton and his Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra. More importantly, in December Williams's friend and advocate André Previn conducted the Houston Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of his ***Essay for Strings*** (three years later the same conductor and

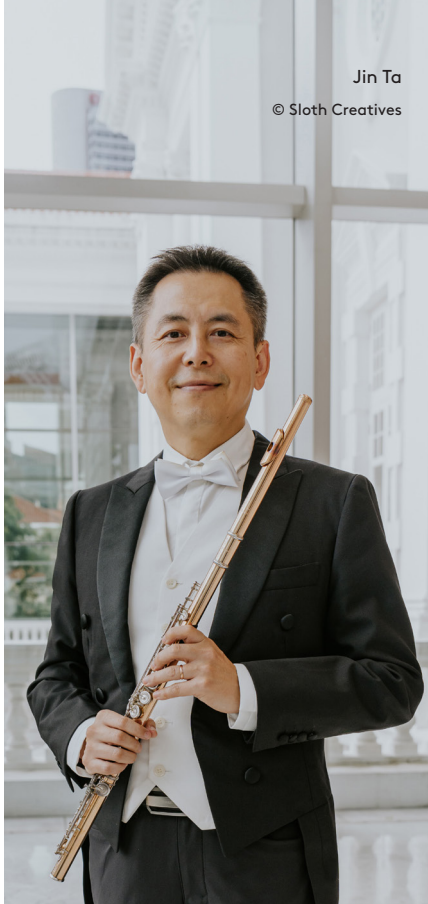
Darrell Ang

ensemble also premiered a much more substantial offering, Symphony No. 1, which Williams ultimately withdrew owing to his dissatisfaction with the piece).

At this stage of his career, Williams's reputation rested largely on his considerable credentials as a pianist (as both jazz musician and film session player) and an accomplished arranger and orchestrator: despite a handful of notable projects including the only film directed by Frank Sinatra (the anti-war drama, *None but the Brave*), and the Irwin Allen-conceived television series, *Lost in Space*, the global fame he was to achieve through such scores as *Jaws* and *Star Wars* was still a decade away (the less said about another scoring assignment which saw the light of day in 1965, the somewhat peculiar Shirley MacLaine and Peter Ustinov comedy Cold War spoof, *John Goldfarb, Please Come Home!*, the better...).

Previn's belief in Williams's talents was further demonstrated by his subsequent programming of the *Essay* in Pittsburgh a year later, which led a local critic to deem the work to be of "unusual merit" and that Williams possessed "undoubted mastery of his craft". Brooding in nature, it is entirely appropriate that it should be paired on this album with music by Bernard Herrmann: with its orchestration and harmonic gestures often involving bleak augmented triads, it inevitably invites comparison with Herrmann's *Psycho* (also scored purely for string orchestra). In his own programme note, Williams described its character as "essentially dramatic. After a quiet introduction, the main "row-like" theme appears. This is followed quickly by just a suggestion of the driving 16th-note "motor" figure which eventually, after other development, moves the work into its final section. It is here that the main theme joins the "motor" figure, and they combine to propel the piece to its conclusion."

Completed in January 1969 (although not performed until 1973), Williams's **Flute Concerto** is a strikingly original composition that could hardly be further from the "Hollywood sound" of many of his film scores, equalled in his output in terms of experimental extremity only by his arrestingly unnerving 1972 score for Robert Altman's *Images*. From his bassoon concerto, *Five Sacred Trees*, and *TreeSong* for violin and orchestra, to the second movement of the Horn Concerto and even *Duel of the Fates* from *Star*



Jin Ta

© Sloth Creatives

Ma Yue

© Sloth Creatives

Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace (both the latter of which claim inspirational roots in Robert Graves's English translation of the ancient Welsh poem *Cad Goddeu* [*The Battle of the Trees*]), forests and trees have been a continual source of creativity for Williams, and this is certainly true for the Flute Concerto. By making the flute the only wind instrument and scoring the accompaniment for strings, two harps, piano, celeste, and a panoply of percussion including mallet instruments and variously-sized gongs, drums, and triangles, his intention was to provide an aural backdrop that would create, as he put it, "mysterious sounds evoking the snapping of branches as one explores some imaginary mythical forest". Williams achieves this largely by deploying a variety of techniques including quarter-tone glissandos and fingerboard snaps (the so-called "Bartók" pizzicato), as well as exhorting the strings in the first bar to gently tap the shoulder or back of their instruments, and at one point requiring the cellos to play pizzicato using their fingernails.

A frequent attendee at concerts by the Los Angeles-based Glendale Symphony Orchestra (formed largely from local session musicians), Williams asked their principal flautist, Sheridon Stokes (who already knew Williams from having played on the soundtrack for *Lost in Space*), if he would consider giving the premiere, an invitation that Stokes gladly accepted. Williams has noted that he was influenced by hearing demonstrations of the Japanese shakuhachi, evident from the range of techniques required of the

Rachel Walker

© Sloth Creatives

Marc-Antoine Robillard

© Sloth Creatives

flautist including overblowing and bending the pitch down with the lips. Stokes recalled that as a keen performer of avant-garde music, he was quite comfortable with these demands, and was trusted by Williams to explore them: "He was always experimenting, looking for new ideas and new sounds. I would take a piece like John's, then I would decide what I wanted to do with it, and use all the experimental techniques I had… to make it into an interesting work of music. So he pretty well left me alone and said just do it the way you want it!".

Reviewing the premiere given by the UCLA Chamber Orchestra under Mehli Mehta (father of Zubin), the critic of the L.A. Times opined that the work "evinces deft craftsmanship, but on first hearing the score seems more distinguished for the variety and skill of its orchestration than for the depth of its musical content". Damning with faint praise, perhaps, yet it is undeniable that the four-movement work demonstrates an extraordinary facility for inventive timbres, from the hints of Varèse and Takemitsu in the outer movements, to the brief second movement consisting entirely of a flute cadenza with occasional contributions from solo cello, and the hypnotic textures of the third movement with its use of glockenspiel, vibraphone, marimba, piano, and harps.

Composed for clarinet and string quartet in 1967, ***Souvenirs de Voyage*** was Bernard Herrmann's last work not written for stage or screen. An ardent Anglophile (he had by this point lived in London for several years and resided there until his death in 1975), Herrmann took as his inspiration for the first movement A. E. Housman's poem, *On Wenlock Edge*, alternating tempestuous, agitated figurations with more melancholic, wistful waltz-like passages. Many moments bring to mind the language of Herrmann's 1958 score for Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, a kinship that is particularly apparent in this premiere recording of Hans Sørensen's 2021 arrangement for clarinet and string orchestra (made possible by kind permission of Herrmann's widow, Norma, to whom the piece was dedicated and whom he married in the same year). As in Sørensen's previous arrangement of Herrmann's string quartet, *Echoes* (also recorded by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and conductor Joshua Tan), the added warmth and richness of sound engendered by a larger ensemble (not least the

extra profundity that the inclusion of double basses affords) make several stretches feel very much like a companion piece to that film's celebrated *Scène d'amour*.

The second movement is a *Berceuse*, and yet it is far from the calm lullaby that one might expect from such a term: its gently rocking motifs soon give way to an agitated, angst-ridden central section. Even the final bars, with the clarinet's F natural sitting in resolute dissonance to the strings' A minor chord, offer no repose. Marked *Canto amoroso*, the third movement takes a somewhat sunnier turn, with the violins imitating the songs of gondoliers (Herrmann's creative stimulus here being Turner's numerous Venetian canvases). A brief, tarantella-like interlude brings further jollity, before the gondola music returns. In a nod to the work's chamber origins, for the conclusion of the piece Sørensen's arrangement reverts to solo strings, bringing the piece to a tranquil, serene close.

While highly respected within the industry by colleagues, Hugo Friedhofer never achieved the level of public recognition enjoyed by many of his cinematic contemporaries such as Steiner, Korngold, or Waxman (for all of whom he was a trusted orchestrator), despite his prolific output including the Oscar-winning score for William Wyler's 1946 film, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, as well as collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, and Marlon Brando in his sole foray into directing (1961's *One-Eyed Jacks*). It is reported that when the New York Times was contacted to inform them of his death in 1981, the editor of the Arts and Leisure section stated that he had never heard of him. Certainly of the three composers represented here, he was by far the most infrequent traverser of the film/concert hall divide, composing only a tiny number of non-cinematic works. Indeed, such is their paucity (combined with a lack of recordings or even performances), that there is only a handful of references to the existence of such pieces as a Flute Quartet and a Trio for bass clarinet, alto saxophone, and flute.

Premiered in January 1973, the ***Suite for 5 Woodwinds*** was written for musicians from the studio orchestras whom Friedhofer would have known very well. As noted above in the case of the Glendale Symphony Orchestra, many Hollywood players would often form smaller

Christoph Wichert

© Iluminen

ensembles to play music in their spare time, regularly commissioning chamber pieces from composers such as Herrmann, Previn, David Raksin, and others. One of the leading bassoonists at the time was Don Christlieb, and it was very likely he who commissioned this quintet from Friedhofer (Christlieb also later published the piece). Like Williams's Flute Concerto, it is very much not what one might expect from a "film composer", with its seven short movements offering clear stylistic nods to Ligeti and (in the angular writing of the first and seventh movements especially) Webern's Symphony, Op. 21 and Concerto for Nine Instruments, Op. 24. This premiere recording is therefore most welcome, demonstrating another side to the formidable talents of Friedhofer.

James Longstaffe

Singapore Symphony Orchestra & Joshua Tan

© Aloysius Lim

Also available on PENTATONE

PTC5187510

PTC5187420

PTC5187230

PTC5187125

Acknowledgements

PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive producer **Hans Sørensen** | Recording producer **Dominik Streicher**
Recording engineer **Daniel Tan** | Editing engineers **Mina Kim** & **Dominik Streicher**
Stereo mixing engineers **Dominik Streicher** & **Kseniya Kawko**
Surround mixing engineer **Kseniya Kawko** | Mastering engineer **Ephraim Hahn**

ARTWORK

Liner notes **James Longstaffe** | Cover, booklet cover & digisleeve design **Marjolein Coenrady** (PENTATONE) | Booklet coordination & design **Karolina Szymanik** (PENTATONE)

This album was recorded on 5 & 6 August 2020 (Essay for Strings), 21 & 22 September 2020 (Flute Concerto), 22 & 23 September 2020 (Wind Quintet) at Esplanade Concert Hall; and on 17 & 18 September 2020 (Souvenirs de Voyage) at the Victoria Concert Hall in Singapore. Album recorded, mixed and mastered by msm-productions Singapore.

Publisher credits: J. Williams' *Flute Concerto* – Hal Leonard, *Essay for Strings* – Wise Music; B. Herrmann's *Souvenirs de Voyage* – Bernard Herrmann Estate (special thanks to Mrs Norma Herrmann); H. Friedhofer's *Suite for 5 Woodwinds* – Christlieb Products.

msm productions

SINGAPORE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PENTATONE TEAM

Managing Director **Sean Hickey** | Label Director **Silvia Pietrosanti** | A&R **Alice Lombardo**
Product Management **Ana Milovanović** | Press **Allie Summers** | Distribution **Camilla Vickerage** | Audio **Wirre de Vries** | Finance **Adrie Engels** | Admin **Lineke Steffers**

Sit back and enjoy