



Biography Unsuk Chin

Unsuk Chin was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1961. She began teaching herself piano and music theory at an early age and went on to study composition at Seoul National University with Sukhi Kang. In 1985, she moved to Europe on an academic exchange scholarship to study in Germany and took composition lessons with György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg until 1988. He encouraged her to look beyond the aesthetics of the current avant-garde. After completing her studies with Ligeti, Unsuk Chin moved to Berlin. She worked as a freelance composer at the Studio for Electronic Music at the Technical University of Berlin. She still lives in Berlin today.

Chin's original style was already evident in *Trojan Women* (1986) for three female singers, female choir and orchestra: music that is modern in its language, but lyrical and non-doctrinaire in its expressiveness. However, it was *Akrostichon-Wortspiel* (1991-93) for soprano solo and ensemble that marked Chin's international breakthrough. It has been programmed by leading international ensembles in over 20 countries to date. In 1992, Unsuk Chin was selected by the Reading Panel of the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris to write *Fantaisie mécanique* in 1994. It is the first of six works commissioned by this ensemble to date. To this day, the composer has a close relationship with this ensemble.

The world premiere of *Miroirs des temps*, commissioned by the BBC for the Hilliard Ensemble and the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2000, marked the beginning of her collaboration with Kent Nagano, one of the most important patrons of Chin's music. She has also worked several times with Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, Mirga Gražinyte-Tyla, Myung-Whun Chung and other renowned conductors.

Her first opera *Alice in Wonderland* was premiered at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich in June 2007 as the opening piece of the Munich Opera Festival. The production, directed by Achim Freyer and conducted by Kent Nagano, was honoured as "World Premiere of the Year" in the Opernwelt yearbook and was on the Los Angeles Times "Best of 2007" list.

From 2009 onwards, important solo concertos were written, including her violin concerto, which has been performed in 16 countries to date. The premiere took place with Viviane Hagner and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under the direction of Kent Nagano. Further works followed, such as *Šu* for Sheng and orchestra with Wu Wei, a clarinet concerto for Kari Kriikku, a cello concerto for Alban Gerhardt and *Le Silence des Sirènes* for Barbara Hannigan and the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra.

Several festivals for contemporary music have been dedicated to her music: MITO Settembre Musica in Italy, Festival Musica Strasbourg, MADE Festival in Sweden, the Festival of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and Lucerne Festival.



Unsuk Chin has a close relationship with many orchestras. She works regularly with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic, among others. She was composer-in-residence with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (2001/2) and the Philharmonie Essen (2009). From 2009, she worked with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra for eleven years. Here she founded and conducted a series for contemporary music. Esa-Pekka Salonen brought her to the Philharmonia Orchestra in London for nine seasons as artistic director of the "Music of Today" series. A position she held until 2020. In 2022, Unsuk Chin began a five-year term as artistic director of the Tongyeong International Festival in South Korea and her artistic directorship of the Weiwuying International Music Festival in Taiwan.

Many of her works have been released on CD. Her first portrait CD for Deutsche Grammophon in the 20/21 series, celebrating ten years of collaboration with the Ensemble intercontemporain, deserves special mention. In addition to recordings of her orchestral works *Rocaná* and *Chorós Chordón*, ensemble works such as *Fantaisie mécanique* and *Gougalon* as well as her piano etudes are also available on CD. A recording of her opera *Alice in Wonderland* has been released on DVD.

Unsuk Chin receives the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize 2024 and is the 51st winner of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation after artists such as Benjamin Britten, who received the first music prize in 1973, Olivier Messiaen, Pierre Boulez, Helmut Lachenmann, Wolfgang Rihm, Tabea Zimmermann and Olga Neuwirth, to name but a few.

Unsuk Chin's works have been published exclusively by Boosey & Hawkes since 1994.

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