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## NZSO celebrate Chinese New Year with impressive New Zealand talent

Celebrate **Chinese New Year** and welcome in the Year of the Dragon with New Zealand's red-hot young pianist **John Chen**, radiant soprano **Jenny Wollerman**, and the welcome return of Hong Kong Philharmonic Associate Conductor **Perry So**.

Chen teams up with the **New Zealand Symphony Orchestra** to rouse one of China's most beloved compositions, ***The Yellow River Piano Concerto***. Originally composed as a cantata by Xian Xinghai in 1939, China's great *Yellow River* was recomposed as a piano concerto during the Cultural Revolution.

At only 18 years of age, **John Chen** made history by winning the prestigious Sydney International Piano Competition in 2004 and was praised for his "torrential brilliance" (*NZ Herald*) and "astonishing maturity" (*NZ Listener*).

Similarly, **Perry So** was critically-praised during his last NZSO Chinese New Year tour for his energy, focus and freshness of touch, and declared "disarmingly brilliant" by *The Press*. He is a rare recipient of the first prize at St Petersburg's prestigious International Prokofiev Conducting Competition.

The NZSO **Chinese New Year** concert opens with Ross Harris' entrancing song cycle *The Floating Bride, The Crimson Village*, featuring the crystalline soprano of New Zealander **Jenny Wollerman**.

Inspired by the dreamy visions of Marc Chagall and savouring the poetry of Vincent O'Sullivan, Harris' colourful piece was the result of a casual conversation with O'Sullivan.

"I found we shared a love of the paintings of Marc Chagall, so we planned a song cycle based around them," says composer Ross Harris.

"Vincent wrote 15 poems filled with subtle images drawn from Chagall. For example from the third song *The Dancer*: 'How the cheeks of the dancer / Are the morning's rising, / How the flip of the clown / Turns the heart of the lover'. Just as Chagall's paintings are filled with beautifully surreal images so the poems reflected this making them wonderful material for setting to music," Harris says.

**Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*** duly completes this colourful festival which celebrates the arrival of spring. No symphony better captures the wonder of Nature and her changeable moods than Beethoven's triumphant *Pastoral Symphony*.

ENDS

*Attached imagery features New Zealand pianist John Chen. Please credit photographer Jane Ussher.*

**For information, interviews and images please contact NZSO Publicist Janina Nicoll:**

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## NZSO Chinese New Year



**Perry So** Conductor  
**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra**  
**John Chen** Piano  
**Jenny Wollerman** Soprano

**HARRIS** *The Floating Bride, The Crimson Village*  
**XIAN XINGHAI** *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*  
**BEETHOVEN** *Symphony No. 6 in F major Op. 68 Pastoral*

**WELLINGTON** / Michael Fowler Centre / Wednesday 1 February / 7.30 pm

**AUCKLAND** / Town Hall / Friday 3 February / 7.30 pm

**NATIONAL TOUR PARTNER:**

