Biography

Zhang Shengliang (aka Niu Niu)

Niu Niu (the nickname and professional identity of Shengliang Zhang) was born in 1997 into a musical family in Xiamen in China's Fujian province. After showing talent at age 3, Niu Niu received his first piano lessons from his father, later making his recital debut a few weeks after his sixth birthday with a program including a Mozart piano sonata and a Chopin étude. At age 8, he became the youngest student in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music's 85-year history. By age 11, he became the youngest pianist to have a solo recital at Tokyo's Suntory Hall and the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

Since age 10, Niu Niu has studied with Professor Hung-Kuan Chen, initially at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and later at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, where Niu Niu and his family relocated. He was admitted by New York's Juilliard School in 2014 with full scholarship and has graduated in 2018.

In 2007, Niu Niu signed with EMI Classics (now Warner Classics), becoming the youngest pianist ever to sign an exclusive contract with a major international recording label. His debut album, *Niu Niu Plays Mozart* (2008) was followed by *Niu Niu plays Chopin—The Complete Études* (2010) and *Niu Niu Liszt Transcriptions* (2012). A recording with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and music director Jacek Kaspszyk of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2 and

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini (2014) immediately led to an invitation to perform with the Warsaw Philharmonic. He released his sixth album, *Niu Niu Portrait*, in 2016. After signing with Universal Music Hong Kong in December 2017, his first album for the label (recorded in Berlin) is released in June 2018.

Niu Niu opened the 2014/15 season performing the Dvořák Piano Concerto with Jiří Bělohlávek and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra at the Dvořák Prague Festival. In March 2014, Niu Niu toured with Yutaka Sado and his Super Kids Orchestra on a five-city tour of Japan's major concert halls; he later returned that summer to give a critically acclaimed recital tour of major halls including Tokyo's Suntory Hall and The Symphony Hall, Osaka. During the month of August 2016, Niu Niu completed a 16-city tour of China. He has already performed more than a hundred concerts in various parts of the world.

Other career highlights include an invitation to the 2007 Pearl Awards at London's Royal Festival Hall, performing Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No.1 conducted by his coach and mentor Leslie Howard in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Charles, Prince of Wales. In 2007, his performance in the CCTV Ministry of Culture Spring Festival Gala was televised nationwide. In October 2010 in Berlin, Niu Niu was made laureate of the 2010 PRIX Montblanc, awarded annually to emerging classical music instrumentalists. Since then, Niu Niu has appeared in recital in many of the world's most prestigious venues, including London's Wigmore Hall, the Shanghai Oriental Arts Centre, and Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts (becoming the NCPA's youngest piano recitalist). In addition to performing extensively in Japan and China, he has toured in Switzerland and France with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra and given concerts in Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund and Essen. In 2011, he performed Rachmaninoff's *Paganini Rhapsody* and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No.1 in Hyogo Performing Arts Centre with Maestro Yutaka Sado. The following year, as first laureate of the Artemisia Foundation, he gave debuts in Boston's Jordan Hall and Yale University's Sprague Hall.

In 2017, Niu Niu attended four summer music festivals in Germany and France, and later that year was invited to perform for the presidents of China, Russia, India, Brazil, and South Africa during the BRICS summit evening gala. He is currently planning a world concert tour (including China and Japan) in 2018.

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