

## MUSIC REVIEW

# 'Garlands' for a beloved friend

The L.A. Phil's Steven Stucky is remembered in a recital featuring 32 short piano pieces.

**MARK SWED**  
MUSIC CRITIC

Music is an art form of memory. We remember what we heard before and anticipate what might come next. Even with the most radical of avant-garde attitudes, which discount expectation, we still must remember to forget.

But we also use music for personal recall, such as taking us back to our own youth or reminding us of others' history. Gloria Cheng's Piano Spheres concert "Garlands for Steven Stucky" on Tuesday night at Zipper Concert Hall was unusual for being a little of all of that. She played 32 short piano pieces written by composer friends of Stucky, who died in 2016 at age 66, that on one level eulogized a beloved mentor and musical friend.

On other levels, the pieces became more quixotic, because music captures character only vaguely. I didn't, in any of these pieces, exactly sense the Steve whom I knew and loved, like



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**GLORIA CHENG** plays pianos big and small during her program at Zipper Concert Hall on Tuesday evening.

"Waltz (In Memoriam Steve Stucky)," waltzing by in 45 seconds, as if Stucky were a flash of memory, a memory you don't trust, a ghost sensed rather than seen.

Most composers were, like Stucky, American. He spent his career teaching

missioned and produced by the Ojai Music Festival.

Stucky had his likes and dislikes, as any fine composer must. He was what you might call a traditional modernist. He enjoyed the abstract 20th century compos-

ers with a... then became angry. She ended with the thundering chords of Daniel S. Godfrey's "Glas."

A range of emotions came in between, a continuum between tonality and atonality, between tune and tune-

flowers," hastening the blossoming of melody.

Lutoslawski was quoted often. Stucky too. E-flat, which is S in the German musical nomenclature, was summoned time and again, a stand-in for his initials. But it was Cheng who played