



YST
Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music

JUNIOR RECITAL

Odyssey

22 NOV 2021 | 12PM
YST Concert Hall



Madelaine Chong Zhia Chee

Jet Stephen Chong, piano

HINDEMITH | SMETANA | BOIELDIEU

About The Performer

Madelaine was born in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. She started playing the harp at the age of seven, and achieved her DipABRSM's Harp Performance qualification in 2017. She has been selected as a member of the Encounter Training Ensemble (ETE), an initiative of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) since 2011. During the time with ETE, she was coached by Tan Keng Hong, the Principal Harpist of MPO, and took part in various stage performances organized by the MPO, mostly held in Dewan Filharmonik Petronas Concert Hall, KLCC. In 2014, Madelaine was selected as a harpist of the Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (MPYO) and has been playing in the orchestra until now. Besides playing with MPYO, she has also been performing with various well-known orchestras in Malaysia such as National Symphony Orchestra (NSO), Penang Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO), ASEAN Youth Orchestra (SEAMAX), and Sunway University Ensemble (SUE). While playing with SUE, she was also a music scholarship holder under the Canadian International Matriculation Programme (CIMP) when she was doing her Year 12. Madelaine has had masterclasses with multiple world-renowned harpists which includes Chantal Mathieu, Leonard Jácome, Catherine Michel, Mariko Anraku and Ieuan Jones. She is currently studying under the tutelage of Ms Gulnara Mashurova, Principal Harpist of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) and also the harp faculty in YST. She is currently in her 3rd Year doing Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Harp Performance, at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore.

**Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music
Junior Recital**

**Chong Zhia Chee, harp
Jet Stephen Chong, piano**

**22 November 2021, 1200
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, Concert Hall**

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

Sonate für Harfe (1939)

I. Mäßig schnell

II. Lebhaft

III. LIED

Paul Hindemith was the most versatile German composer of his generation and an active theorist, teacher, violinist, violist and conductor. He embraced a “neoclassical” writing style, utilizing atonality paired with the classical writing structures. However, political upheaval of the 1920s had a profound effect on Hindemith and his music and he fell in and out of favor with the Nazi regime throughout his time in Germany. In April 1933, following the rise of the National Socialists, Hindemith discovered that a large portion of his published compositions had been banned. Sharp criticism of Hindemith’s music within the National Socialist Party led to a lot of shortcomings for the composer.

Hindemith’s Harp Sonata was composed during October of 1939 in Bluche, Switzerland just after the start of World War II. His harp sonata utilizes traditional forms and clear tonal centers while stretching the boundaries of tonal harmony and formal organization. Although the first two movements are in close dialogue with classical-period sonata forms, the final movement is strophic to reflect the form of a poem by German poet, Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hölty that Hindemith included in the score, truly a product of an artist using neoclassicism to build a wall against his own pain, since it not only utilizes a non-normative tempo but a non-normative form as well.

According to Edward Witsenburg, Marcel Grandjany (1891-1975), a famous French American harpist and composer, had an extramusical interpretation of this piece and it has then been incorporated into the performance history of this work. Grandjany stated that the first movement reminded him of "***a cathedral, majestic and beautiful. In the end, the shadows grow longer and longer, the sun descending in the afternoon.***" Grandjany described "***children playing in a churchyard***" as the image evoked by the second movement. Lastly, the third movement, the lead to the interpretation of the sonata, is based on a poem in which the poet describes "***the death of a harpist whose final wish is to have his harp placed behind the cathedral altar***".

The first movement opens with a strong and full hymn-like chordal introduction announcing the primary motif of the movement, which symbolises the grandeur of the cathedral.

The second movement, with the usage of simple rhythmic patterns, the waltz-like compositional style and the use of fourths and fifth intervals (which he frequently used in his compositions), respectively calls to mind the children playing and the sound of chimes or church bells ringing rapidly in the background.

The third movement of Hindemith's Sonata is prefaced by a poem by Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hölty. The sounds of the harp echo in the church with a melody that scans to the lines of this poem. "Lied" by Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hölty.
translation :

*O my friends, when I am dead and gone,
Hang the little harp there behind the altar
Where on the wall the shimmering half-light catches
The funeral wreaths of many departed maidens.*

(Strophe 1)

*Then the good sexton will show the little harp
To visitors, stirring it to sound
As he touches the red ribbon that hangs from the harp
And floats beneath the golden strings.*

(Strophe 2)

*"Often," he says in wonder, "at sunset,
The strings unbidden murmur like humming bees:
The children, called hither from the churchyard,
Have heard it, and seen the wreaths a-quiver."*

(Strophe 3)

Although Hindemith never underlined the poem in the score, Harpist Barbara Poeschl-Edrich matched the original German text of the poem in her dissertation, in which the text of the poem was able to be syllabically set to the music of the final movement.

In relation to Hölty's poem, this movement may be interpreted as an epilogue that reflects on the process of death through motives seen in the first and second movements, the unusual form and use of a poem in the final movement draws attention and signifies the importance of this reflective ending.

Much of the careful observance of harp practice in this work can be attributed to harpist Clelia Gatti-Aldrovandi, for whom the sonata was written. Hindemith, unfamiliar with the harp prior to composing his Harp Sonata, worked closely with her to assure the piece was idiomatic for the instrument. The unusually well-composed nature of the work has set it apart and secured its spot as a staple in the harp repertoire of today.

François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775-1834)

Harp Concerto in C Major, Op.77 (1800-1801)

II. Andante lente

III. Rondo: Allegro agitato

Boieldieu was born in Rouen, France. He was a leading French composer, who was well known for his operas, and often known as “the French Mozart”. He formally received his musical education from the choirmaster and organist of the local cathedral in Rouen. Due to his part time job as a piano tuner, he was not able to commit to a full time job as a composer. Thus, the only other route for him as a composer was to write for Opera-Comique. This allowed him to do both piano-tuning and composing.

In 1795, during the French Revolution, Boieldieu moved from Rouen to Paris where he met his close friend Sébastien Érard, the inventor of the double-action harp. This meeting was one of the important factors that led to the creation of this masterpiece. From there, Boieldieu gained more aspirations to compose for the harp. Due to the sophisticated technical complexity of Harp Concerto in C, also known as *Concerto in Three Tempi*, it became a standard repertoire of the harp until this day.

As Boieldieu was born in the same era as Mozart and Beethoven, it is believed that he was hugely influenced by their musical style which can be evidently heard in this Concerto.

The second movement starts with a dramatic minor section which is accompanied by the piano where the harp takes charge of the mournful melody which moves across Boieldieu’s thin orchestration. The melancholic but determined second section brings in an air of familiarity almost like he quoted himself from one of his operas. This then transitions seamlessly into the speedy **final movement**. The bouncy and urgent feeling Allegro agitato showcases the technical prowess and stamina of the performer with its increasingly bright and extroverted style before halting at the cadenza. This minor key cadenza gives the listeners a breather, demonstrating the dark and sparkling tones of the harp, before returning to the main theme.

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

Vltava (The Moldau). No.2 from Má Vlast (My Country) (1874)

Bedřich Smetana was known as the “father of Czech music” in his homeland. He was a pioneer of the musical style, which convened the people and revived the culture and aspirations of his homeland.

Vltava (The Moldau) is reflective of the Bohemian river that flows north through Prague on its way to join the Elbe, which in turn leads its waters to the North Sea. The idea for this tone poem dates to August 1867, when Smetana traveled with his musician friend Mořic Anger to the western edge of Bohemia, near its border with Germany.

Their friend R.G. Kronbauer later published Anger’s account of Smetana’s reaction during his travels:

“Great and unforgettable was the impression made on Smetana by our outing to Čenek’s sawmill in Hirschenstein, where the Křemelná joins the River Vydra. It was there that the first ideas for his majestic symphonic poem Vltava were born and took shape. Here he (Smetana) heard the gentle, poetic song of the two streams. He stood there, deep in thought. He sat down and stayed there, motionless as though in a trance. Smetana looked around at the enchantingly lovely countryside, at the confluence of the streams, he followed the Otava, accompanying it in spirit to the spot where it joins the Vltava, and within him sounded the first chords of the two motives which intertwine and increase and later grow and swell into a mighty melodic stream.”

During the 1400’s, Bohemia lost its independence and became dominated by a series of Catholic Austrian rulers. Protestant Bohemians, filled with the spirit of the Reformation, they rebelled in 1618. Despite their pride and bravery, the resistance was crushed by the Habsburg army in 1619. The Bohemians were forced to accept German culture and language ever since. In the 1870’s, in which the Moldau was written, The Bohemians' interest in freedom intensified. During this time they embraced "The Moldau," as a patriotic symphonic national anthem. This, in fact, was the **composer’s intention**. He wanted his masterpiece to remind both his countrymen and outsiders of Bohemia’s special beauty, culture, and destiny.

“*The Moldau*” represents an exceptional expression of patriotic or nationalistic music. The musical poem reflects the pride, oppression, and hope of the Bohemian people. It depicts the course of the river, Two springs pour forth in the shade of the Bohemian Forest, one warm and gushing, the other cold and peaceful, reflected by two flutes that introduce the ascending motif, interweaving as they bubble up, accompanied by plucked violins and harp. The clarinets add their voices, but descending, rather in mirror image to the flutes. The forest brook, hastening on, becomes the river Vltava (Moldau), in which the famous melody emerges, sung by the violins, oboes and bassoons. Throughout the years, many musicologists believe that the melody, which was arguably the most beautiful part of the composition, is adapted from an old mediaeval melody, *La Mantovana*. Through thick woods it flows, as the gay sounds of the hunt and the notes of the hunter’s horn are heard ever nearer. *It flows through grass-grown pastures and lowlands where a wedding feast is being celebrated with song and dance. (Not reflected in this transcription).* At the St. John Rapids the stream races ahead and the Moldau theme is reprised as it crashes through and finally achieves grand magnificence. Flowing on in majestic peace towards Prague and welcomed by time-honored Vysehrad (castle), the texture thins and eventually diminishes, symbolising the river vanishing far beyond the poet’s gaze.

With such dense orchestral textures and genius manipulation of timbre in the orchestral version, the transcription for harp took many years of perfecting before it could reach its current grandeur, since harpists were demanded to reproduce a soundscape to that of an orchestra. Transcribed by Hans Trneček, a Czech harpist, most of the elements from Smetana’s original piece are translated to the harp solo, which, with the use of idiomatic harp writing such as glissandos and arpeggiation, was able to capture the true beauty of the piece. Trneček took some liberties in his work in several different ways. One of the more controversial changes that he made had to do with the ending of the piece. Smetana’s original idea of this ending had to do with the instruments dying down and ending the piece with surprisingly loud dominant to tonic chords. What Trneček did was to use a completely different musical idea that included only the tonic chord being arpeggiated for several measures at an increasing dynamic.