

PROGRAMME

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Première Rhapsodie

LI XIN (M.Mus1), clarinet

BEATRICE LIN, piano

IGOR STRAVINSKY

L'histoire du soldat for clarinet, violin and piano

LI XIN (M.Mus1), clarinet

YAO LIANG-YU (B.Mus3), violin

PUALINA LIM MEI EN (B.Mus4), piano

– Intermission (10 mins) –

CARL NIELSEN

Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57, FS 129

I. Allegretto un poco

II. Poco adagio

III. Allegro non troppo – Adagio – Allegro vivace

LI XIN (M.Mus1), clarinet

LEE YU RU (B.Mus4), snare drum

BEATRICE LIN, piano

About the performer

Li Xin is currently pursuing Master's in clarinet performance under the tutelage of Mr Ma Yue, who opened the door to the completely new world for him and many others later. Li Xin was the first batch of students at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, he is feeling fresh and enthusiasm everyday when he back to this place where influenced him the most! He is also surrounded with full of passion and motivation again from the people who influenced him before and by new friends through the collaboration of playing and studying.

Programme Notes

Debussy **Première Rhapsodie**

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) is remembered in music history as one of the leading exponents of Impressionism. The works of Debussy represent the extraordinarily beautiful musical palette of colors that personify Impressionism. Harmonic innovations of the Impressionists included the use of whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, and non-traditional modulations and chromaticism. These new devices separated Impressionist harmony from other musical forms and previous stylistic periods.

Debussy composed the *Première Rhapsodie* towards the end of his life. The piece was commissioned by the Paris Conservatoire for their annual examinations in 1910. So, this work is actually a "Solo de Concours" (competition solo) written to test the abilities of the clarinet students at the Conservatoire. The *Première Rhapsodie* is a free form piece. Debussy poses immense challenges on the performer. The difficulties include a number of significant technical obstacles, tests of endurance, breath control, and subtleties of tone, intonation, and nuance.

Stravinsky **Histoire du soldat**

Igor Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*) began life in the fall of 1917, during World War I. Stravinsky (1882–1971) was in Switzerland at the time and wanted to compose a traveling theater piece that could be staged in smaller Swiss towns. The subject came from the Russian writer Alexander Afanasiev's collection of folk tales, and was reworked by Stravinsky and the Swiss writer Charles Ferdinand Ramuz. The work premiered in a small theater in Lausanne in a production bankrolled by the financier Werner Reinhardt, who was also an amateur clarinetist. In its original version, *The Soldier's Tale* calls for a seven-player instrumental ensemble, two actors, a narrator, and a dancer. Stravinsky arranged the present suite for clarinet, violin, and piano as a gesture of gratitude to Reinhardt, and it was first performed in Switzerland in November 1919.

The little opening flourish of "The Soldier's March" was Stravinsky's first thematic idea; he originally cast it for trumpet and trombone. The soldier is on leave, trudging home to his village. He pauses by a brook to play his violin ("The Soldier's Violin"), which attracts the Devil, who offers to make the soldier rich in exchange for his fiddle (a symbol of his soul). The soldier agrees and discovers that he can no longer play. He resolves to lose all of his ill-

gotten gains to the Devil in a card game, whereupon he picks up his violin (“Little Concerto”). In a sequence of three dances, the soldier revives an ailing princess who has promised to marry the first man to cure her illness. The sequence reflects Stravinsky’s interest in dance music in general, and jazz in particular, here exemplified by the “Ragtime.” As Stravinsky put it, “The Soldier ‘Ragtime’ is a concert portrait, or a snapshot of the genre, in the sense that Chopin’s Valses are not dance waltzes, but portraits of waltzes. Since I had never heard any of the music in actual performance, I borrowed its rhythmic style not as played, but as written. The jazz element brought an entirely new sound to my music...” The Devil tries to frustrate the soldier’s courtship, but the soldier thwarts him by forcing him into a manic dance (“The Devil’s Dance”). The soldier ultimately can’t decide between his new life with the princess and the happiness he knew in his childhood home, so he sets off for his village. The minute he leaves the princess’ kingdom, the Devil reclaims his soul as the narrator offers the moral of the story: “You must not seek to add to what you have what you once had. You have no right to share what you are with what you were. No one can have it all. It is forbidden.”

NIELSEN Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57

Carl Nielsen wrote his Concerto for Clarinet, Op. 57 in 1928 for Danish clarinetist Aage Oxenvad, most Nielsen authorities describe Oxenvad had substantial influence on Nielsen, and many aspects of Oxenvad’s moody and tempestuous personality are captured in the Concerto.

Nonetheless, the music has more to do with Nielsen’s life, In 1926, Nielsen suffered a massive heart attack. Until the time of his death in 1931, he suffered many more cardiac incidents. The Concerto is the only large-scale work Nielsen composed during the last five years of his life and it is filled with conflict that never resolves. The Concerto is his only major work that lacks progressive tonality. There is also conflict in the interplay between the clarinet and the soloistic snare drum. Both instruments take on characters which are in direct opposition to one another. The clarinet is also set apart from the orchestra by means of its many cadenzas as well as its stylistic and range differences. The final aspect of conflict is the short coda which dramatically and tragically ends the music’s journey by abruptly returning the music back to its original key, signifying a failure to reach an ultimate new arrival. The coda seals the dark pessimism of the music.