

CHANSONS ET DANSES

COUPERIN

Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins

RAMEAU

L'Egyptienne

RAVEL

Valses Nobles Et Sentimentales

BUSONI

Sonatina No. 6 "Carmen-Fantasie"



Sean Gan, piano

A Junior Recital - 23 Nov 2021 (Tue)
4:50pm @ YST Concert Hall

Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music



23 November 2021 | TUESDAY

Sean Gan Chu Chao

Piano Recital

Programme

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About The Performer

Raised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, **Sean Gan** started taking piano lessons at the age of 7 and has since then grown to be an aspiring musician. As a piano major, Sean Gan has previously studied with the established Malaysian pianist Chee Su-yen and also took masterclasses with pianists such as Bobby Chen, Ng Chong Lim, Poom Prommachart and Toru Oyama. He possesses both ATCL and LTCL performance diplomas and graduated with a Diploma in Music from the Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA). Currently, under the masterful guidance of Filipino pianist Mr. Albert Tiu, he is halfway on his venture for a Bachelor's Degree in Piano Performance at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory in Singapore. He has gained prizes in festivals and piano competitions, including first prize in the 2018 Kingsburg International Piano Competition in Yantai, China, second prize in the Senior Category of the 2018 UCSI University International Piano Festival & Competition, and Best Accompanist Award at the 4th Chin Yong Music Festival held in Malaysia. During his course at the YST Conservatory, he has also received the Best Accompanist Award through the Conservatory's 2020 Concerto Competition. He had also performed in the ABRSM High Scorers' Concert at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre back in 2013.

Sean has also from time to time engaged himself in numerous performances as a keyboardist with the KLPAC orchestra, involved in the piano part for works such as Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* in the programme "*From Mozart to Bernstein*", as well as the premiere of Malaysian composer Yeo Chow Shern's orchestral work *Celebration & Dance (Perayaan)*. He also performed Hindemith's Kammermusik No.1 with the large ensemble at YSTCM in the programme "Lichtebogen".

Apart from listening to music and playing the piano, he also enjoys arranging music during his free time.

Programme Notes

COUPERIN

Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins

RAMEAU

L'Egyptienne

François Couperin and Jean-Philippe Rameau would be no strangers to lovers of harpsichord music, for their legacies would come to define the stylistic means for French music by those of Debussy and Ravel, almost 300 years later. Considered to be the leading figures of 17th-century French keyboard art, they contributed dearly to the harpsichord literature and later will become a major influence for Bach and his keyboard suites. A great deal of miniature harpsichord works was grouped into such "suites", a term that has its roots in the French that is used to describe an ordered set of instrumental pieces, which are more often than not dance-influenced tunes. Couperin's equivalent of the suites were termed as "ordres", and within these ordres contained many pieces with evocative and descriptive titles. "*Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins*" is a little gem of a quirky mix between lightness and persistence reminiscent of the ticking of clocks (*Le Tic-Toc Choc*) and knocking of little hammers (*Les Maillotins*). Labelled as a "*pièce croisés*" (literally crossing piece), which requires the hands to be very close to each other and

often overlapping, this poses a choreographic challenge to the one-manual pianist, whose hands will constantly be fighting for space with each other.

From the Suite in G Major/Minor which was part of the third book from his *Pièces de Clavecin* (Pieces for harpsichord), known as "*Nouvelles Suites*", *L'Égyptienne* sounds nothing close to Egyptian, but is rather more associated to a gypsy. The "exoticness" is a combination of Rameau's unique virtuosic style and electrifying ornaments, all meticulously written down for maximum intended effect.

RAVEL

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales

The 20th-century saw an influx of neo-classicism amongst French composers, but at the dawn of that influx saw a figure that adored composition built upon long-existing, popular genres. Maurice Ravel's fascination of the Waltz had been apparent in his famous tribute to (or deconstruction of) the Viennese Waltz: *La Valse*, which first drafts date back to 1906, this enthusiasm undoubtedly carried on into *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* written some 10 years later. Evidently a homage to Franz Schubert's sets of *Valses Nobles* and *Valses Sentimentales*, the title suggests that rather separating the noble waltzes apart from the sentimental ones like Schubert did, he presents the listener a concoction of bold, extroverted gestures and intimate, sensitive expressions. Like Schubert, Ravel envisioned them as a set, in which the waltzes followed one after another naturally.

I: Modéré – très franc

Noble, grand, in the character of an introductory waltz, with a more voluptuous middle section. Harmonically adventurous with a lot of "tall" chords.

II: Assez lent – avec une expression intense

Pleading and alluring. Many sighing gestures with rich, dissonant harmonies.

III: Modéré

Childlike innocence with a hint of mysteriousness, evokes an image of a village scene.

IV: Assez animé

This transitions from III without halt. Misty and nonchalant, reminiscent of fairy dust. Features a characteristic hemiola.

V: Presque lent – dans un sentiment intime

Has a hesitating, wandering melody that is often missing the main beat.

VI: Vif

Playful, mischievous, and volatile. Has a limping and skipping quality.

VII: Moins vif

A gentle rocking waltz that eventually blossoms into a noble and climactic orchestral tutti. A hazy middle section highlights bitonality and a 2-against-3 polyrhythm.

VIII: Épilogue: lent

The title "epilogue" is nothing but appropriate; like flipping through the pages of an album, fragments and shadows of the 7 preceding waltzes flash by, amidst a haunting haze of sound.

BUSONI

Sonatina No. 6, BV284 "Kammer-Fantasie über Carmen"

A man of many talents, Italian composer, pianist, editor, conductor, educator, and writer Ferruccio Busoni might be better known for his transcriptions on many of J.S. Bach's works.

But he was also a masterfully adventurous and imaginative composer, exploring harmonic language that were not confined to traditional practice.

As a pianist, Busoni at the piano, as described by Alfred Brendel, "signifies the victory of reflection over bravura"; this statement cannot be truer, as all of it is also accurately reflected throughout the writing of this "Carmen-Fantasy" Sonatina. While the opera paraphrases of Liszt contain flamboyant additions that highlight the pianistic capabilities of the performer, Busoni was no such showman, and took a completely different approach to reimagining opera fragments, in that he was very efficient; while Busoni's embellishments are nowhere near simplistic, he adds nothing more than necessary to exemplify the dramatic and (sometimes) shocking narrative of Carmen.

A prelude unveils a sparkling melody akin to a children choir parading past accompanies the curtains rising, and the music unfolds and takes on all sorts of canonic forms, varying textures, and keys. The light-heartedness of this prelude melts into the warm, lush melody of the Flower Song "*La fleur que tu m'avais jetée*" (The flower you had thrown at me). The passionate aria depicting José's obsessive affection for Carmen is suddenly interfered by an ominous premonition, as the "fate" motif of the last act surfaces momentarily before melting into one of the most well-known melodies from *Carmen*: the Habanera "*L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*" (Love is a rebellious bird). Busoni initially masquerades the Habanera behind a dreamy mist, before unleashing a fiery, capricious transformation of the aria full of wit and brilliance. A tumultuous transition changes the scene to the well-known *Prelude* of Act I, now in more dignified fashion, with the direction to pianists to imitate trumpets (*quasi Tromba*). After several zealous swirls, the trumpets reiterate the *Prelude*'s theme, only to become progressively more distant. The music takes a sinister turn as the theme is put to a halt, shrouded by a mist of arpeggios before the scene of the final act of *Carmen* – José murders Carmen with a knife stab. The listener is put in extreme shock, but so was the audience when *Carmen* was premiered in 1875. Busoni's masterful work materializes of the true nature of *Carmen* - the tragic, dark tones of the ending, and the gruesome fate of the *femme fatale*.

"Our art is a theatre of surprise and invention, and of the seemingly unprepared."

- Ferruccio Busoni

Programme notes by Sean Gan Chu Chao.