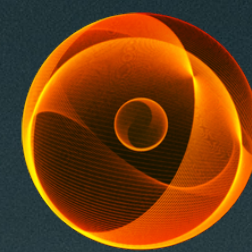


Haydn Andante with Variations in F Minor  
Beethoven Piano Sonata Op. 109

29. 11. 2022 | Tuesday | 6pm

YST Concert Hall



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Yong Siew Toh  
Conservatory  
of Music

# VARIATIONS

Junior Recital | Ashley Chua Kai Qian

# Biography

Ashley Chua Kai Qian is a third year undergraduate at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM), currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music (B.Mus) with a double major in Music and Society (MS) and Piano Performance. Her mentors include Mr Lim Yan, Dr Thomas Hecht and Prof Albert Tiu, and she has also benefitted from masterclasses with renowned pianists Sir Stephen Hough, Mr Kun-Woo Paik, and Mr Joseph-Maurice Weder.

As a pianist, Ashley has participated actively in a range of concerts and competitions, most recently placing 3rd in the Piano division of the YSTCM Concerto Competition 2022. Her background in music analysis and research as an MS major gave rise to her most recent papers investigating Music Imagery as a learning and symbiotic tool in Collaborative Piano, as well as studies on the relationship between Language and Nationalistic identity within Singaporean Musical Theatre. Outside of solo piano and music research, Ashley has a keen interest in collaborative piano and accompaniment, as well as in music and non-music related academia.

# Joseph Haydn

## Andante with Variations in F minor, Hob XVII:6

The Andante with Variations in F Minor, written in 1793, remains a popular piece out of Haydn's late works, and, as Schiff has suggested, written in memoriam of Mozart.

The piece comprises two principal themes: the first, sombre and noble in F minor, is brought forth by the stately rhythm of broken triads in the left hand; fluttering embellishments in the right hand, coupled with a generally thinner texture contributes to the innocent and carefree nature of the second theme in F major. This juxtaposition of parallel minor and major keys, not uncommon within Haydn's oeuvre, illustrates the tension inherent in the dichotomy of two distinct tonal centres, a struggle over dominance of character; the duality only deepens as the themes morph through the variations, and become increasingly dissimilar in their affects.

The opening theme then returns in an almost nostalgic light, perhaps suggesting the futility of the aforementioned struggle. The Neapolitan chord, an ostensibly minor feature of the F minor theme, propels the piece into a quasi-developmental section. Here, the movement of chords in parallel, chromatic fashion, coupled with an exploitation of imbalanced dotted rhythms, engenders a sense of unease and apprehension. The tension generated finds its release in an explosive F minor climax, featuring moving chords over a steady tonic pedal that precede a section of flourishing virtuosic runs, before falling back into the chromatic parallel chordal motif. Approaching the end of the piece, we witness a final ambiguity – a set of chords which eschew a concrete sense of tonality, leaving the listener bereft of conclusion.

# Ludwig van Beethoven

## Piano Sonata Op.109 in E Major

Conceived in 1820 for Maximiliane Brentano, the Op. 109 follows the immense Hammerklavier sonata. The Op.109 bears a strikingly long third movement, revealing a radical take on the sonata genre. Before discussing this peculiar movement, however, it would be amiss to neglect the mention of Beethoven's quotations in the first movement. He quotes here 'Es ist vollbracht' (tl: it is finished), a notable aria from Bach's St. John Passion. Beethoven's interest in the quote is hardly an unfamiliar feature in his compositions, such as within the third movement's lament in the Sonata Op. 110 and the first movement of his Cello Sonata Op.69; in Op.109, he offers harmonic development on the material, which leads up to a grand recapitulation section, which also serves as the apex of the movement.

The tranquility with which the first movement ends is abruptly broken by the unexpected introduction of the second movement, typically played attacca. An authoritative statement of the tonic chord in the parallel E minor prepares the listener for what is to come, a movement anecdotally described by pianist Steven Hough as 'madcap' if not for the tension generated by the descending bassline, then its frantic rhythm. A brief polyphonic section appears to offer the listener a moment of respite - Alas, the rest is fleeting, as the frantic nature characterising the second movement returns soon after to end the piece.

A serene and boundless theme permeates the final movement, a great contrast from the madness preceding. The melody adorns a number of costumes - a pseudo-aria in bel canto style in the first variation; a dreamlike meander in the fourth; and an energetic fugue in the fifth. The last virtuosic variation features a slow buildup the most prominent feature of which is a dominant pedal point which continually undergoes diminution. The perpetually shortening rhythms, now merely a trill, guides listeners into the climactic, cadenza-esque final section filled with running figures alongside a sparkling melodic line above it.