



Different Strokes

27 Nov 2022, 8 pm

YST Conservatory Concert Hall

PROGRAMME

KOH KAI JIE, *conductor and piano*
YST Chamber Orchestra

MOZART

Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Allegretto – Presto

BRAHMS

Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

I. Allegro con brio

II. Andante

III. Poco allegretto

IV. Allegro – Un poco sostenuto

CONDUCTOR'S MESSAGE

Different Strokes is conceived as a culmination of my journey at this wonderful institution, YST Conservatory. The past six years have been filled with much growth and opportunity - I am most grateful. I have learnt much from completing my undergraduate piano study with the brilliant pianist Prof Albert Tiu, followed by a fruitful foray into conducting under the wonderful guidance of Maestro Jason Lai.

Unquestionably, it can be daunting to emerge from all the support generously given to me the past few years as I graduate from YST. To this, the opening theme from Brahms' Third Symphony resonates deeply – 'frei aber froh' (free but happy). Though this newfound independence brings about some measure of uncertainty, it certainly will allow me to spread my wings and let my artistic identity take root and blossom.

My utmost gratitude goes out to all the YST teachers and musicians who have been a part of my artistic journey in one way or another. To all YST teachers: you have each made such a profound impact in the development of my artistic identity. Thank you for believing in me and for nurturing me. To all musicians whom I have had the privilege to conduct and lead: thank you for your time and efforts. Each project that you've devoted yourself to has taught me so much - thank you for letting me lead you and work with you.

To YST Vice-Deans Assoc Prof Chan Tze Law and Assoc Prof Brett Stemple: thank you for your wisdom and mentorship. You have played such a big part in shaping me into the musician I am today.

Finally, I give all glory to God for constantly guiding and leading me into His perfect will for my life, providing me with constant encouragement in the form of my spiritual community.

Koh Kai Jie

Conductor, Pianist



Koh Kai Jie is an emerging Singaporean conductor and pianist. Kai Jie is currently pursuing a masters' degree in conducting at the Yong Siew Toh (YST) Conservatory of Music under the guidance of Jason Lai. He also graduated from the YST Conservatory with Bachelor of Music with Honours (Highest Distinction) in Piano Performance, studying with pianist Albert Tiu.

Kai Jie has a passion to share the joys of music making with younger musicians, serving as conductor for various ensembles which explore new and fresh pedagogical dimensions. In April 2022, he conducted the YST Electone Orchestra, a pedagogical tool which seeks to give undergraduate conservatory pianists a glimpse of orchestral playing using cutting-edge Yamaha Stagea Electones. He led 8 YST pianists turned orchestral electone players in a performance of the monumental Beethoven *Symphony No 5*. In addition, Kai Jie has conducted various YST ensembles in concert including the YST Conservatory Orchestra and OpusNovus, the conservatory's new music ensemble. Most recently in August 2022, he conducted Chen Zhangyi's chamber opera *Kampung Spirit* as part of the YST Voyage Festival, working with YST singers and musicians. Kai Jie also serves as Assistant Conductor of the St. Nicholas Girls' School String Orchestra.

His conducting journey started during the second year of his undergraduate degree, when Kai Jie formed a chamber orchestra comprising conservatory musicians, conducting the orchestra in performances in the conservatory regularly since. In particular, the

orchestra's performance of the Beethoven *Coriolan Overture* in 2019 was highly commended by music critic Dr Marc Rochester, who was "deeply impressed with both the quality of playing [he] drew from the orchestra and [his] insightful interpretation of the Beethoven Overture".

As a pianist, Kai Jie has achieved numerous accolades. Most recently in 2020, he attained the first prize in the YST Conservatory Concerto Competition (Piano Category). He also won the second prizes in the Singapore National Piano and Violin Competition (Senior Category) and the Yamaha Piano Competition (Singapore) in 2013. Kai Jie has also worked with eminent pianists Daejin Kim and Noriko Ogawa in public masterclasses in YST Conservatory.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) composed his **Piano Concerto No. 17 in G major, K. 453** in 1784. This period of his life proved to be his most prolific in the genre of the piano concerto, writing a total of 15 piano concertos between 1782-1786. This concerto was written for his student Barbara Ployer and was said to have been premiered by her in 1784.

The first movement, ***Allegro***, opens with a gently lilting melody which unfolds elegantly and effortlessly, giving the whole movement an inevitable sense of flow. The winds feature prominently, often in dialogue with the strings or the solo piano. The ***Andante*** second movement provides a brief respite from the liveliness of the first, opening with an introspective and plaintive theme introduced by the violins. This theme is later stated by the piano alone, with the simplest left-hand accompaniment possible. This simplicity provides a profound sense of intimacy, transporting the listener to a different emotional space. The concerto closes with the ***Allegretto*** third movement, whose theme originated from his beloved pet Starling which sang a similar tune which Mozart carefully notated in his expense book. The movement ends with a playful and cheeky ***Presto*** section.

The cadenzas performed today in the first and second movements are written by **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**. They help us to look at Mozart through the lens of Brahms, who though belonging to a time with a completely different sound world, truly respected the classical traditions of Mozart and Beethoven.

They provide us the link to the next piece on the programme, Brahms' ***Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90***, written in 1883. This symphony is the shortest and most compact of his four symphonies

and was well-received at its premiere, with music critic Eduard Hanslick remarking, "Many music lovers will prefer the titanic force of the First Symphony; others, the untroubled charm of the Second, but the Third strikes me as being artistically the most nearly perfect."

The first movement of the symphony, *Allegro con brio*, opens with a musical motto comprising of the notes F-Ab-F, which stands for 'frei aber froh' (free but happy). This was composed in reaction to the phrase 'frei aber einsam' (free but lonely), which his friend Joseph Joachim adopted as his personal motto. Although Brahms developed romantic sentiments for numerous women throughout his life, he never married and remained content with the independence he had. Although rooted in F major, Brahms intentionally altered the theme F-A-F to include the A-flat, hinting at the parallel minor, F minor, driving the music forward through the constant conflict and instability, which eventually resolves at the end in F major.

This is contrasted by the second movement, *Andante*, which opens calmly and peacefully with a lyrical clarinet melody. As the movement unfolds, Brahms introduces more chromaticism, giving a mysterious and other-worldly quality to the music. This is followed by a sentimental and nostalgic third movement, *Poco allegretto*, opening with a tender melody first introduced by the cellos, while other instruments take their turns at singing this melody. At the opening's reprise, the horn poignantly brings back this melody. The symphony ends with an energetic *Allegro* movement, which builds gradually and eventually erupts into a powerful climax, with declamatory brass chorale fanfares, made intense by the blistering strings underneath. As with all the previous movements, however, the music eventually settles down and closes peacefully.

MUSICIANS

FIRST VIOLIN

Neville Athenasius Ang, *concertmaster*

Teo Wei En Reina

Joelle Chiam

Chui Yingqi

Wu Tsai-Jou

Renee Toh

SECOND VIOLIN

Alyssa Goh Hui Yi, *principal*

Chan Wai Mun Joanne

Thanatat Sriaranyakul

Foo Yue Ning

Gum Seng Aung Du

Vanessa Jazzy Wahyudy Irwanto

VIOLA

Chan Shee Ann Shannon, *principal*

Benedict Ng

Xiao Lei

Liu Wei-Jia

CELLO

Zhu Zeyu, *principal*

Saran Charoennit

Tan Shi Ling Denise

Sherzod Bakhtiyorov

DOUBLE BASS

Shohei Yoshihara, *principal*

Hibiki Otomo

Ng Lai Ting

FLUTE

Quek Jun Hao Julien

Li Jia-En *

OBOE

Quek Jun Rui *

Ng Wei Xiang *

CLARINET

Ma Yi-Ting

Yang Jinliang

BASSOON

Kong Xianzhang *

Zhong Tianai *

Muhammad Afiq bin Hussaini, *contrabassoon*

FRENCH HORN

Thanachock Udomphat

Tsai Yi-Fang

Chai Mei Qin *

Gao Xiaoxuan *

TRUMPET

Loi Chiang Kang

Aw Ping Hui

TROMBONE

Huang Shao-Wei

Toh Chang Hui

Jeniffer Stephanie Silva Coresma

TIMPANI

Lee Yuru

* Musicians
for Mozart