

### Concert #3 – Game of Pairs

Piyawat LOUILARPPRASERT (TH): *The Troop of Alive Machines*  
Notes by Chua Zi Tao (BMus4, Composition)

Currently based in Ohio, Piyawat Louilarpprasert is a Thai composer whose compositions are not written just for acoustic ensembles, but also fuses cross-discipline elements from visual arts and technology to create compelling electroacoustic works and sonic installations. His music also explores the sonic possibilities of deconstructing and synthesizing instrumental mechanisms and physicality. For instance, his experiments with whirly tubes as an extension of wind instruments have brought him to write a series of works such as *Riding an Elephant to Catch a Grasshopper* (2018) for solo trombone with tube, and *Smelly Tubes* (2019) for 14 tubed instruments. Meanwhile, Piyawat also embraces his Thai roots, writing a handful of experimental works using ethnic Thai instruments. Through these three aspects, Piyawat believes that technology provides the opportunity to amalgamate with sonic and physical phenomena to create novel experiences.

Piyawat is also a highly prolific composer who achieved various awards and commissions such as Harvard University (USA), Impuls Composer Commission 2025 (Graz), and Lucerne Festival Commission 2021 (Switzerland). He has also collaborated with various ensembles such as Tacet(i), Arditti, [Switch~ ensemble], and Princess Galyani Vadhana Youth Orchestra. Currently, he is the Assistant Professor of Composition at Bowling Green State University. He also serves as the chair and programme curator for the Int-Act Festival held annually in Bangkok, Thailand.

In the future, Piyawat wishes to develop his composition into a creation of “unknown instruments”. These conceptual instruments are the result of the collaborative process with engineers and scientists to create instruments that are vastly different from the existing ones, which in turn establishes new possibilities for sonic exploration.

*The Troop of Alive Machines* was initially drafted in 2016, but Piyawat only started to develop the piece in 2020. This came in time with his recent shift to work with more acoustic instruments, while contemplating the relationship between humans and machines. In this piece, he juxtaposed the relationship of the ethereal bowed string harmonics in the violins (symbolising humans) against the forceful low strings using plastic cards to swipe across their strings (symbolising machines). The piece also has numerous industrial rhythms that move in and out of predictability and unpredictability, symbolising the innate imperfections even for the infallible machines. As a result, the piece is formidable. The extended techniques used create a sonic experience that is akin to a military drum section that one may mistake for an orchestral work.

Finally, I would like to thank Piyawat for his time to share this piece and his general musical developments over an online interview.

György KURTÁG (HU): Selections from *Játékok*  
Notes by Cheong Chi Yun Estene (BMus3, Composition)

György Kurtág was born in Romania in 1926. He began studying piano in 1940 with Magda Kardos and composition with Max Eisikovits. Kurtág remained in Hungary where most of his works were premiered until the 1980s. Kurtág spent a year (1957 – 1958) studying in Paris, attending the classes of Messiaen, Milhaud and Max Deutsch. Kurtág's time in Paris had a deep and lasting effect on his approach to composition. Kurtág proceeded to teach piano and chamber music at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest from 1967 until his retirement in 1986. After which, he continued teaching for many years after.

*Játékok* (Games) is a collection of short piano works composed for pianists of all ages. This collection was conceived through Kurtág's strong commitment to teaching along with his innovative pedagogical approach as it was created to supplement traditional teaching material. The main pedagogical ideas in *Játékok* are the use of the piano as a toy as well as the use of the whole body for playing. This foregrounds music as a physical experience, giving precedence to physical gesture and the manner of performance. *Játékok* is asking performers to bring their bodies into dialogue with the instrument, bringing the body to the centre of the musical experience.

So how does Kurtág make *Játékok* game-like? He does so through the various aspects of notation, the use of Kinaesthesia to invoke physical movements of the body through music and also the use of personal presence of the performers in producing the music.

The special graphic notation used by Kurtág should be approached in an experiencing manner. Kurtág created unique note figures that aid the visualisation of the style of playing and understanding of the physical movement involved in playing. This special notation aims to stimulate the performer to experiment with sound and sensations, allowing spontaneity in interpretation, rather than analysing the score intellectually as with traditional pieces. Kinaesthesia is related to humans' inner experience of space and movement. Through movement and expression, a multi-sensory experience involving what they see, hear and feel is created. The intense use of personal presence is much needed in Kurtág's pieces as well. Each person's experiences will undoubtedly differ depending on the personality of the player or listener, their skills and past experiences. Meaning that each player has to understand the musical events from their own perspective, allowing them to create and experience music on a personal level.

Thomas DEMENGA (CH): *Duo? O, Du*  
Notes by Aow Rachel (BSc3, Second Major in Composition)

Born on 14 November 1954, Thomas Demenga is a highly accomplished and influential Swiss composer and cellist. He is also a highly regarded teacher with positions at prominent institutions such as the Hochschule für Musik Basel, Switzerland since 1980.

Demenga first studied cello as a major under Walter Grimmer, a skilled cellist. In pursuit of excellence, Demenga further studied in prestigious institutions and with professionals such as Leonard Rose, Mstislav Rostropovich and the Juilliard School in New York. His dedication and talent earned him top prizes at renowned competitions, including the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow and the Geneva International Music Competition.

As a soloist, Thomas Demenga has established himself as a leading figure in the world of classical music. He has performed with many esteemed orchestras including the Berliner Sinfonie-Orchester and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, composers and conductors on the most prestigious stages around the globe. Demenga's unique interpretations of the cello repertoire, especially 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century works, begets a fresh dimension to the historical performance practice of Baroque music and his virtuosic interpretations of Classical and Romantic repertoire. This earned him critical acclaim and a devoted international following.

In addition to his remarkable career as a performer, Demenga is also recognized for his contributions as a composer. In 1991, Demenga became the first Swiss composer to be awarded first prize for his composition *solo per due* for two violoncellos at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. He also became the composer-in-residence at the Davos Festival, Young Artists in Concert in August 2000, where he was subsequently appointed artistic director. In 2006, he decided to commit fully to performing and composing, thus resigning from the role. However in 2011, he came the artistic director of the chamber orchestra Camerata Zurich. In the present, Demenga is well-known as a virtuosic performer and an innovative composer who inspires many to follow in his footsteps.

*Duo? o, Du...* encapsulates the essence of contemporary cello music. The title itself, a playful interplay of words, hints at the duality and questioning nature of this piece. Composed for two violoncellos, this piece explores the cello to its fullest potential, showcasing both its lyrical and technical aspects. It begins with phrases comprising decreasing natural harmonics and open strings, employing microtones. The music then briefly goes crazy, showcasing technically challenging passages in the extremely high register. Subsequently, the piece goes on to explore arpeggio-like patterns without a clear tonal centre, gradually blending and merging the two voices into one. The music involves sharing in melodic lines and interlocking patterns, creating a fascinating blurring of individual identities.

Yii Kah Hoe (MY): *Equatorial Rainforest*

Notes by Xiao Wen, Anyamanee Phakhaponwiwat and Lee Yi Xuan (BMus1, Composition)

Yii Kah Hoe is a Malaysian composer and Chinese *dizi* and *xiao* improviser. Yii has been recognized as one of the major voices among Southeast Asian composers of his generation. Yii's music is perceived as bold and avant-garde. His works use sounds and rhythms of many traditional instruments from various ethnic cultures. His music has been widely performed in Asia, America, and Europe by ensembles such as Ensemble Mosaik, Interensemble, Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, The Claremont Concert Choir, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Birmingham Conservatoire Wind Orchestra, Pan-Pacific Ensemble and musicians such as Peter Veale, Christopher Redgate, Moritz Ernst, Jürg Henneberger, Maruta Staravoitava, Anne Harley, Luisa Sello, Duplum Duo and more.

Recently, Yii won the National Outstanding Educator Award 2018 presented by the Private Education Cooperative of Malaysia. In the fall of 2015, Yii was the Scripps College Erma Taylor O'Brien Distinguished Visiting Professor at Scripps College in Claremont. Yii was a guest composer and guest speaker at Birmingham Conservatoire UK (2013 & 2014), York St John University (2014), Yale-NUS College (2017), Iowa State University (2015), Tianjin Conservatoire of Music (2017), Mahidol University (2017) and Guanxi Conservatoire of Music (2014, 2015, 2016).

Yii was the festival director of the Kuala Lumpur Contemporary Music Festival 2009, the festival director of the SoundBridge Festival (2013, 2015), the president of the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers (2014 – 2016) and a senior lecturer at SEGi College Subang Jaya, Malaysia since 2000.

*Equatorial Rainforest* is written for wind quintet. Yii frequently draws inspiration from nature, so it can be thought that this piece also expresses something about the rainforest. Yii employs interplay between the different instruments as if conversing with each other, representing different activities and relationships in a rainforest. The bassoon and horn play the important roles of the bass layer, similar to the forest floor, providing the grounds on which the other instruments can have more freedom to explore. The ascending and descending lines played by duo pairings, such as flute and oboe, seem to imitate the sounds of the animals and birds.

Gerhard STÄBLER (DE): *pièces chaudes*  
Notes by Ong Ping Din (BMus2, Composition)

Gerhard Stäbler (b. 1949) was born in Wilhelmsdorf near Ravensburg in southern Germany. He studied composition with Nicolaus A. Huber and Organ with Gerd Zacher, and is currently an active freelance composer in the Rhine-Ruhr region of Germany. His music has been performed, among all, at the Borealis and Bergen International Festivals (Norway), ISCM World Music Days 2014 (Wrocław), MUSIC DOCUMENTS'13 (Tokyo) and ZKM-Festival Piano Plus (Karlsruhe); as well as by the HR-Sinfonieorchester (Frankfurt), Den Norske Opera (Oslo) and the Mainfranken Theater (Würzburg).

Known for his incorporation of multidisciplinary and multisensory elements in his music, Stäbler has extensively collaborated with visual artists, videographers, writers and dancers. Stäbler's music strives to challenge norms and overcome expectations of the performers and audience, stimulating the mind and senses to new patterns of perception and thought.

Stäbler's extensive oeuvre encompasses orchestral, chamber and electronic works, as well as works for theatre, dance and performance art. Devoted to interdisciplinary and performative art, Stäbler, together with composer Kunsu Shim, established and directed the EarPort, a centre for "experimental music and encounter of the arts". There they developed their concept of "PerformanceMusik", staging works characterised "precisely composed dramaturgy" in which Stäbler involves himself as a performer and reciter.

On top of his work as a composer, Stäbler has been a director of music festivals such as the 1995 ISCM World Music Days in Ruhr, and has toured extensively in recent years to countries including Iceland, Korea, Portugal, the USA and Uruguay, setting up large-scale musical projects in public spaces as well as teaching composition in various capacities.

Stäbler wrote *pièces chaudes* (2005) in the Greek village of Mariou. Written for four-hand piano, it was inspired by the works of Erik Satie and the late works of Franz Liszt. The piece features unique textural writing comprised mainly of chord clusters and glissandi, as well as a sense of undulating momentum through written-out accelerandi and ritardandi.

The piece is in three movements, titled *crossable*, *don't move stones* and *mingled with all kinds of colors* respectively. The piece incorporates fragments of text from the ancient Greek poet Sappho – from which these titles are derived – which are spoken in the second and third movements. Each movement has a distinct character. The first dramatically juxtaposes moments of calm and intensity; the second features fragmented gestures corresponding to the text, which is spoken "very quickly but still with inner calmness"; and the third is tranquil, with the text whispered at a "normal, medium speed – neutral, without emotional charge".

Canat DE CHIZY (FR): *Sextuor à cordes*  
Notes by Lin Ssu-Ting (BMus4, Composition)

Born in 1950, Édith Canat de Chizy is a prominent French composer with a career deeply rooted in her early training as a violinist. Canat de Chizy's musical path began with the violin, an instrument she played before transitioning into a career as a composer. After completing her secondary education in Lyon, she relocated to Paris to further her studies in art, archaeology, and philosophy at the Sorbonne. Simultaneously, she joined the Conservatoire of Paris (CNSMDP) and achieved significant recognition, receiving six premier prizes, including one in composition. She also delved into electroacoustics, studying with the Groupe de recherche musicale (GRM).

One pivotal moment in her career occurred in 1983 when she crossed paths with composer Maurice Ohana while studying under Ivo Malec. This encounter greatly influenced her work, and she later co-authored a book on Ohana with François Porcile in 2005. Canat de Chizy's background as a violinist has left a profound impact on her compositions, which now number over one hundred. Her works often feature the *sinfonia concertante*, a form of orchestral music characterized by solo instruments. Notable compositions include *Moïra* (1998), a cello concerto that won the 1999 Concours Prince Pierre de Monaco, and *Exultet* (2000), a violin concerto that received a nomination for the Victoires de la musique. Her other concertos, including *Les Rayons du jour* for viola and *Missing*, her second violin concerto, have also been well-received. Her compositions have been commissioned by prestigious organizations such as the French Ministry of Culture, Radio France, the Orchestre de Paris, IRCAM, and various ensembles. Her vocal works, including *Livre d'heures* (1984) and *Tombeau de Gilles de Rais* (1993), have received critical acclaim. She has also ventured into electronic compositions, such as *Over the Sea* and *Visio*.

Throughout her career, Canat de Chizy has been invited as a guest composer at numerous events and festivals, solidifying her reputation as a leading figure in contemporary classical music. Her honors and awards include the International Rostrum of Composers Prize for *Yell* (1990), the Prix Paul-Louis Weillier from the Académie des Beaux-Arts (1992), and several SACEM prizes, including the Grand Prix de la musique symphonique in 2004. She became a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 2005 and made history by becoming the first woman president of the institution in 2016.

Additionally, Canat de Chizy served as a composition instructor at the Paris Regional Conservatory until 2017. Her outstanding contributions to the world of music have been acknowledged through prestigious honors, including being a Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, Officier de l'Ordre du mérite, and a Commandeur des Arts et lettres. In 2016, she was awarded the Grand Prix du Président de la République from the Académie Charles Cros in recognition of her lifetime achievements in music.

The piece *Sextuor à cordes* for two violins, two violas, and two cellos was composed by Édith Canat de Chizy in 1982. This piece was published by Lemoine and premiered in the same year at Radio France in Paris.

Edgard VARÈSE (FR/US): *Octandre*  
Notes by Alicia Diva Chandra (BMus3, Composition)

Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) was a French-born American composer. Varèse spent his childhood living in Paris and Italy. He started composing as a youth on his own, until he began to study composition proper with the likes of French composers Vincent d'Indy, Albert Roussel and Charles Widor at the Schola Cantorum in Paris in 1904, with strong encouragement from French writer Romain Rolland and French composer Claude Debussy.

As a young adult, Varèse travelled to Berlin in 1907 and continued to develop his voice as a composer under the tutelage of Italian composer Ferruccio Busoni and German composers like Richard Strauss as well as Arnold Schoenberg. By the time that Varèse was in his 30s, he immigrated to the United States and made a name for himself as a composer, conductor and advocate of contemporary music. He was a co-founder of the International Composer's Guild for the presentation of new works (1921).

*Octandre* by Edgard Varèse is a piece written for an eight-player ensemble, with the title's literal translation to be a "flower with eight stamens". It was premiered on 13 January 1924 by E. Robert Schmitz, another fellow advocate of performing works by living composers. *Octandre* is made up of 3 movements. Each movement starts with a instrument solo, in which the musical idea is then further developed by the ensemble.

The first movement, "I. Assez lent", begins with an oboe playing a solo that is made up of repeated "announcement-like" melodies in a slightly slow manner. Gradually, the rest of the ensemble joins in in a similar manner to the oboe and the texture thickens, creating harsh dissonances like minor 2nds and major 7ths. Towards the end of the movement, there are momentary swells, and evenly distributed pulsations in the brass and winds, foreshadowing the next movement by creating a tone of nervousity.

The second movement, "II. Très vif et nerveux" is a faster movement which begins with the piccolo exploring this idea of nervous pulsations further, in the form of repeated short notes. The piccolo is shortly joined by the brass instruments playing similar pulsations in their lower register, and then by the rest of the ensemble.

The third and final movement, "III. Grave — Animé et jubilatoire" begins as a stark contrast to the bright colors from the 2nd movement, with entries by the bassoon and double bass in the lower registers, and at a contrasting slower tempo too. The energy slowly builds from this new low, with similar motifs like the oboe's melody in the 1st movement and then pulsating rhythms in the 2nd movement. Just as the title of the 3rd movement suggests, the ensemble gradually picks up the tempo and joins back in in full, sounding animated with a sense of triumph celebration. This movement ends with a fanfare-like section by the entire ensemble.