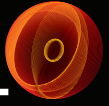


CELEBRATING

2023

YST

Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory
of Music



Homages

26 OCTOBER 2023, 7.30PM
YST ORCHESTRA HALL



Performers(?) Present

Programme

OPUSNOVUS

WITH

LIEN BOON HUA, CONDUCTOR

JOYCE KOH

FINGERPRINTS FOR ENSEMBLE

TOSHIO HOSOKAWA

IN MEMORY OF ISANG YUN FOR PIANO TRIO

ADELINE WONG

EMPAT FOR STRING QUARTET

PÉTER EÖTVÖS

DA CAPO FOR ENSEMBLE

PROGRAMME NOTES

JOYCE KOH: FINGERPRINTS FOR ENSEMBLE (2015)

Joyce Beetuan Koh (b. 1968) is a Singaporean award-winning composer, sound artist and educator who writes music for a variety of forms, ranging from concert music to installations to films and more. Her artistic identities lie in her fascination with architectural structures and scientific theories that constructs her musical language.

Koh was awarded her PhD in Composition in 1997 from the University of York under the guidance of Nicola Lefanu, and her completed her Bachelors and Masters in Composition from King's College London with David Lumsdaine. In 1998, Koh was awarded the Young Artist Award by the Singapore National Arts Council. In 2007, upon returning from overseas, she joined School Of The Arts Singapore as a founding faculty member and contributed to the founding of the Composers' Society of Singapore where she served as president (2013-2016).

Throughout Koh's career, her music has been performed by multiple international soloists, ensembles and orchestras such as BBC Symphony Orchestra and Singapore Symphony Orchestra. In addition, two of her piano pieces were also published by Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM); la piano magenta (2001) and Piano Peals (2005). She was also Composer-in-Residence at Herrenhaus Edenkoben (2004) and in Ecole National de Musique de Montbéliard (2006). Joyce's music has also been featured in international festivals such as Biennale Musique France and Birmingham Frontiers Festival. Currently, she is the Associate Dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Associate Dean of Technology and Sustainability Research at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore.

Fingerprints (2015) was originally composed for Ensemble Reconsil's project, Exploring the World. The project journeying through 14 different countries aims to feature the diverse writing styles of young composers in the different countries. The piece is written for an octet of flute, oboe, clarinet, tenor trombone, violin, viola, cello and piano. Fingerprints explores the process of saturating three distinct 'earworms' that Koh resonates with. Koh saw these distinct 'earworms' as musical fingerprints, each uniquely identifiable to its own, hence drawing them as musical materials in this piece. They are Béla Bartók's opera, The Bluebeard's castle, the chant from the opening movement of Henri Dutilleux's Métaboles, and the sixth movement from Olivier Messiaen's Quatuor pour la fin du temps.

Notes by Ng Xin Ci (BMus4, Composition)

PROGRAMME NOTES

TOSHIO HOSOKAWA: "IN MEMORY OF ISANG YUN" FOR PIANO TRIO

Toshio Hosokawa was born in Hiroshima, Japan in October 1955. He first studied piano and composition in Tokyo, then studied composition with Isang Yun at Berlin University of Arts in 1976, and later with Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Huber at the Hochschule für Musik Freiburg from 1983 to 1986. Hosokawa first rose to prominence with the 2001 world premiere of his oratorio *Voiceless Voice* in Hiroshima, which focuses on the silence about the traumatic events of the Hiroshima bombing.

Hosokawa has been a member of the Academy of Fine Arts Berlin since 2001 and was a fellow of Berlin's Institute for Advanced Study in 2006/7 and 2008/9. In 2013/14 he was composer in residence at the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra as well as at the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra from 2019 till 2021. In 2018 he received the Japan Foundation award, and in 2021 he was awarded the Goethe Medal for his services to cultural exchange between Japan and Germany. He is the artistic director of the Takefu International Music Festival and the artistic director of the Suntory Hall International Program for Music Composition.

Amongst his large compositional repertoire, Hosokawa's music theatre works have become the repertoire of major opera houses, such as his first opera *Vision of Lear* (1998) and *Hanjo* (2004), which features elements of Japanese Noh theatre. Hosokawa considers the compositional process to be instinctively associated with the concepts of Zen Buddhism and its symbolic interpretation of nature, creating a unique sound that expresses the beauty of the world through music. In his own words, "We hear the individual notes and appreciate, at the same time, the process of how the notes are born and then die: a sound landscape of continual 'becoming' that is animated in itself". Hosokawa's works draw inspiration from Western avant-garde art as well as deeply rooted in the aesthetic and spirituality of traditional Japanese culture, like calligraphy, and traditional Japanese court music, gagaku.

Hosokawa was commissioned to write *Memory - In Memory of Isang Yun (1996)* by the Twenty-second Century Club, directed by Tatsuo Yoshitake, and is dedicated to pianist Kaya Han. This piece was composed to mourn the death of Isang Yun who died in November 1995. Yun was also Hosokawa's composition teacher at the Berlin University of Arts. *Memory* was written for violin, cello and piano. It contains extended techniques like microtones, *al niente*, noise, piano muted strings and clusters.

Marked with the expression "very slow and calm", the piece starts with a very light and breathy sound, continuing with very slow pace and quiet dynamics. It is very clear that Hosokawa draws on the concepts of Zen Buddhism, the presence and lack thereof of musical material, allowing each note to occupy as much space as it needs to without much external interference. The tempo then gradually increases, albeit irregularly, due to Hosokawa's influence from gagaku where there is no fixed pulse. There was a moment where the dynamic suddenly got very loud, showing listeners a big contrast compared to the beginning of the song. This section is the most emotionally climatic in the piece, pouring out the grief and angst of mourning Yun's death. Finally, the dynamic and tempo get softer and slower, as if the music is going back to where it began, alluding to the natural cycle of life and death.

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

PROGRAMME NOTES

ADELINE WONG: EMPAT FOR STRING QUARTET (2023)

Singapore-based Malaysian composer **Adeline Wong**'s music has often been described as bold, with textural energy and kaleidoscopic colours. Her recent music has aimed for distillation of musical material by concentrating on economy and exploring the material from every possible perspective.

Adeline has written for music theatre, orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments and voice, as well as music for film. Her works have been performed by the Belgian National Orchestra, Orkest de ereprijs, the Netherlands, Bang on A Can USA, The Song Company, Australia, MiNesemblet Norway, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. Adeline has worked with conductors Matthias Bamert, Pascal Rophé, Kevin Field, James Wood, Brad Lubman, Roland Peelman and Kenneth Young. Winner of the 2005 Cameronian Arts Awards for Malaysia's Most Promising Artist Award and Best Original Composition in 2005 and 2003, in 2014 she was also featured in the 'Top 10 of Asia' list of the New Generation Music Composers.

Graduating from the Eastman School of Music, USA, Adeline received a scholarship for postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music London, where she was awarded the Cobbett and Hurlstone Composition Prize. She has studied composition under the tutelage of Joseph Schwanter, Christopher Rouse, David Liptak, Augusta Read Thomas and Edwin Roxburgh.

A piece atypical of the composer's usual writing style which is often compounded with intricate developmental writing, **Empat (2023)** for String Quartet encapsulates youthful exuberance. It is reminiscent of the composer's younger days when she was fascinated by the sonorities of John Cage's Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano, which resembled the sounds of the Gamelan that was, and still is, so familiar to her.

The term "Empat" refers to "four" in both Malaysian and Indonesian tongues. It refers to not only the number of players in a string quartet, but also the idea of kotekan empat in Gamelan in which the interlocking patterns of the gamelan form a harmony with two outer tones often sounding intervals of fifths and occasionally sixths. The resonant, gong-like sonorities which are borne from this reference particularly to the reyong – a long row of metal gongs in Balinese Gamelan played by four players – are allowed to exist as itself, with the connections between the sonorities highlighted without intentionally facilitating the assimilation of the various sonic components, in a similar manner to Cage's String Quartet in Four Parts. The piece also employs a recurring 2-note motive quoted from the Balinese Tari Pendet – a welcoming dance typically performed by young girls, as witnessed by the composer during her research trip to Bali.

A premiere designated for this concert "Homages", Empat pays homage to John Cage's early music; but as the idea of homage is also, in the composer's words, one of reminiscence, Empat traces back to the composer's youth, drawing influences from the memories of her past and synthesizing together the Cagean influences and her Southeast Asian roots.

Notes by Jellal Koay (BMus2, Composition)

PROGRAMME NOTES

PÉTER EÖTVÖS: DA CAPO FOR ENSEMBLE (2014)

Péter Eötvös (b. 1944) was born in Transylvania, spending his childhood in Miskolc where he met György Ligeti. Receiving a thorough musical education from a young age, he studied composition at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music at the age of 14. At Budapest, he also worked as a theatre musician, performing improvisations to film projections and writing film scores.

From 1970, Eötvös furthered his studies in Cologne on a DAAD scholarship, studying composition with Bernd Alois Zimmermann as well as conducting. There, he worked with Karlheinz Stockhausen as his engineer, copyist and a musician in his ensemble, and held a permanent position at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) electronic music studio. In 1978, Eötvös conducted the opening concert of IRCAM upon the invitation of Pierre Boulez, and thereafter served as artistic director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain until 1991.

Eötvös' diverse musical experiences and exposures contribute to his eclectic compositional output, which include several electronic works and exhibiting the influence of a variety of contemporary composers. The composer's early involvement with theatre music was particularly influential on him. Devoting himself to the theatre, Eötvös has written thirteen operas, which have been regularly staged in opera houses around the world.

Contemporary social and political issues often form the inspiration or subject matter of Eötvös' works. His symphonic work *Alle vittime senza nome*, co-commissioned by the La Scala, Santa Cecilia, Florence and Turin Symphonic Orchestras, pays respects to African immigrants who lost their lives at sea en route to Italy. His operas *Der goldene Drache* (The Golden Dragon) and *Angels in America* reveal the lives and struggles of illegal immigrants and people living with HIV respectively.

Eötvös' works have been featured at prominent festivals such as the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Salzburg Festival, and commissioned by leading global orchestras such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, and Philharmonic Orchestras of Vienna, Berlin, New York and Seoul. Eötvös also finds success as a conductor and educator, mentoring young composers and conductors as a professor in Karlsruhe and Cologne from 1992 to 2007, and through his Peter Eötvös Contemporary Music Foundation established in 2004.

da capo (2014) was co-commissioned by the Remix Ensemble (Porto), International Mozarteum Foundation (Salzburg) and New World Symphony (Miami). Presented as a “dialogue with Mozart”, the work draws on musical fragments from Mozart’s sketchbooks that were never realised as full compositions. The title “da capo” – meaning to start again from the beginning – informs the musical processes in the piece. Mozart’s themes are presented initially in their original forms, but are then repeated with gradual transformations, beginning again and again in different forms. Eötvös constantly juxtaposes and contrasts the “classical” and “contemporary” sound worlds, as brief moments of clear melody, diatonic harmony and rhythm are soon distorted and made ambiguous.

Mozart’s themes are adapted and recontextualised not only through their musical transformations, but also the instrumentation, “remodelling” them through timbres and techniques on modern instruments adapted from their 18th Century counterparts. This is especially highlighted in a solo part scored for the marimba or cimbalom (a late 19th Century Hungarian hammered dulcimer), neither of which have existed in Mozart’s time.

Notes by Ong Ping Din (BMus2, Composition)

@YSTConservatory



Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music

3 Conservatory Drive

Singapore 117376

T +65 6516 1167

E conservatory@nus.edu.sg

ystmusic.nus.edu.sg

