

- A **Sonatina for Trombone and Piano**, by Dr. Bernard Tan (10' 25")
- Obsession** by Er Yenn Chweern (12' 24")
- Interfussion**, by Leong Yoon Pin (11' 23")
- B **Variations for Chamber Ensemble** by Tsao Chieh (15' 06")
- Variants on "Kuan Shan Yue"** by Phoon Yew Tian, (9' 8")

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A CONCERT FEATURING WORKS OF SINGAPOR COMPOSERS

new music forum

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CONDUCTOR: LIM YAU
THE NEW MUSIC FORUM ENSEMBLE

new music forum



DR. BERNARD TAN

Dr. Bernard Tan Tong Gai was born in Singapore in 1943 and studied piano with Arthur Tan Hoay Jock, Lee Shek Mu, Lim Kwei Eng, Benjamin Khoo and Douglas Tan. He was Acting Head of the Department of Music at the University of Singapore in 1977 - 1978 and is currently Associate Director of the Centre for Musical Activities at the National University of Singapore. His works include 'My Country and My People', a setting of Lee Hai Pheng's poem for Robd Chuan and piano; 'The Back Home' for Robd Chuan and piano; 'The Back Home' for string orchestra; written for the "Spendent" by string orchestra; written for the Asian Composers' League Conference in Singapore in 1983. 'O for a thousand tombs to sing', a setting of Charles Wesley's hymn composed by 'The United Methodist Choir to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Methodist Church in Singapore in 1985. 'Little Things', a setting of Gertrude Herpf's poem for mixed chorus and piano, commissioned by the Methodist Boys' Choir; the music for the ballet 'Conflict' based on Garcia Lorca's 'The House of Bernarda Alba' choreographed by Anthony Chen and performed by the National Dance Company (Ballet Group) at the Singapore Arts Festival 1986; 'Movement for Viola and Piano' written for Jin Hoep, principal violist of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and premiered by him in 1986 and Sinfonietta No 2 commissioned by the Performing Rights Society and premiered in 1987 with Lim Yiu conducting.



YERN YENN CHWEN

Born in Singapore in 1965, Yern Chwen began to learn the violin and piano at the age of six under Chan Yung Shing and Wick Pak Chuan respectively. He studied composition under Lee Teck Fiah. Under Lee Teck Fiah's guidance, he won the Best Award and Outstanding Performance Award in the Second Singapore Junior Original Concert (1976) with 'Night Song' a work for violin and piano.

Yern Chwen continued his studies in the Royal Academy of Music, London, when he was awarded a SSO scholarship. It was then he was exposed to 20th century music and began to compose under the guidance of Sarah Thomas. Several works were written during these years, including a sonata for violin and piano, a sonata for piano, a solo violin suite and some other shorter works.

Since his return, Yern Chwen started to compose choral music. His cantata 'An Unknown Emigrant' and a shorter work 'Fishes 152' were premiered by his church choir (Prichard Road Presbyterian Church) at the Victoria Concert Hall in August 1986.

Yern Chwen is presently a first violist in the SSO.



PHOON YEW TIEN

A prominent figure in the Singapore music scene, Phoon Yew Tien is the Assistant Conductor of the People's Association Chinese Orchestra. In 1980, he was awarded the Singapore Symphony Orchestra Scholarship and he studied the Oboe at the Conservatorium of Music, Bonn (Australia) in 1983 with a double degree in Music (Instrumental) and Music Composition. Prior to his overseas training, Yew Tien had studied under Mr. Leong Yoon Pin.

Yew Tien's compositions have bagged numerous awards. They include the prestigious Dulcie Robertson Prize (1980, 1981 and 1983) and the Yehon Inno Memorial Prize (1994) awarded by the Asian Composers' League.

Locally, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Youth Orchestra and the People's Association Chinese Orchestra have commissioned Yew Tien to compose for their performances. He has also collaborated with various dance and drama groups and many of these works were featured in the Singapore Festival of Arts, Festival of Dance and the ASEAN Arts Festival. During this year's Festival of Arts, Yew Tien was commissioned to write a 1 1/2 hours contemporary dance drama piece 'Nu, Wu' which was the opening item for the Festival. Yew Tien's 'More on Singapore' was performed at the national day celebration in August 1988. In addition, Yew Tien's works have been performed by various orchestras in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, England, France and Italy.



LEONG YOON PIN

Leong Yoon Pin has been a leading figure in the Singapore music scene for over twenty years. He received his music education at the Guildhall School of Music in London, gaining the AOSM and GOSM diplomas.

In 1960, Leong founded the Metro Philharmonic Society which has become one of Singapore's most active and productive amateur orchestras. The Society's first annual public performance was the public performance of his own composition, Leong Yoon Pin's 'The Music Director and the driving force behind the Society'.

Leong was also the first Resident Conductor of the Singapore National Orchestra established under the National Theatre Trust in 1969. The Singapore National Orchestra, under him, laid the foundation upon which government and public support for a fully professional orchestra could be built in later years.

Leong is perhaps best known as a composer - one of the first batch of young in Singapore starting to create music, which reflects the ethos and aspirations of Singaporeans. He studied composition in France under the great teacher, Nadia Boulanger. In his compositions, Leong seeks to combine the natural Chinese idiom with contemporary technique.

He has numerous works to his credit - vocal, choral, instrumental and orchestral. He is the first Singaporean composer to have his work performed by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. He has written two symphonies, the first of which has been performed by the SSO. In addition, he has received commissions from other bodies, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Singapore Youth Orchestra.

Having served as a member of the Faculty of the Institute of Education, Leong has contributed much to music education in Singapore by his work within and outside the Institute. He has written, arranged and edited numerous songs for educational use, which have enriched the musical curriculum of our schools. He has also served and is still serving in many other bodies, including the Ministry of Education's Choral Advisory Committee and the Management Committee of the Singapore Youth Orchestra under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

In 1982, Leong is awarded the Cultural Medallion for his outstanding achievements and contributions to music.



TSAO CHIEH

Tsao Chieh studied piano with Victor Doppelt and obtained his LRSM (pianoforte performance) in 1972, at the same time taking music privately at "A" level. In 1973, he was offered an SAF scholarship to the University of Manchester, Institute of Science and Technology to pursue a degree in Electrical Engineering where he also obtained the IEE prize for academic excellence. During these years, he became keenly interested in music composition and listened to much recorded music, particularly of the twentieth-century. At that time, attempts at writing were hampered by a lack of technique, and after a stint in Signal school at Fort Gordon in Georgia, USA, he returned to work in the Ministry of Defence. Several years later, he was again offered a MINDEF scholarship to Stanford University to pursue a Doctorate in Electrical Engineering. The flexible curriculum there enabled him to simultaneously pursue music at first as an extra-curricular activity, then for a Master's degree. While at Stanford, he studied composition with Laird Smith, piano with Nelson Sparrow and flute with Alexandra Hawley and Carol Aaga. He wrote, 'Four Songs from Romantic Poets for Soprano and Chamber Ensemble' (1983) won first prize in the Jean and Paul Hanna Music Composition competition organized at Stanford. While over there, he also completed 'Singapore, Synoptic Suite for Large Orchestra' (1985) which was premiered by the SSO during the 1985 Arts Festival. More recently, he has completed 'Stages' (1987) which was premiered by the Singapore Youth Orchestra at the National Day Celebrations and 'The Defence Scientist's Office in MANDEF' and has also published papers on the matrix quantization of linear/cubic/cubic speech in the Transactions of the IEEE.

DR. BERNARD TAN

This work was written in May/June 1988 at the request of Chong Shoo Mei, trombonist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. Ms Chong wanted a suitable piece to play at a Trombone Workshop in Australia earlier this year. Only one movement of the work was performed in Australia, so this is the premiere of the complete work.

The Sonatina is in three short movements and is written in a direct and easily accessible style. The first movement, *allegro ma non troppo*, is a sprightly and cheerful sonata form with a brief development. There are two contrasting themes: the piquant principal theme heard at the beginning

and a more lyrical, wide ranging second subject over a syncopated piano accompaniment. The short coda ends with the principal theme gently fading out. The pensive second movement, *andante tranquillo*, has been adapted from an interlude in the composer's music for the ballet "Conflict" choreographed by Anthony Then and presented by the National Dance Company (ballet group) in the 1986 Festival of Arts. The third movement, marked *allegro spiritoso* is highly spirited and energetic and barely gives the trombone and piano any respite, demanding from both players a bravura performance which culminates in a forceful ending.

OBSESSION

ER YENN CHWEN

Obsessed by four emotional elements, the work seeks to express these feelings musically.

- 1) Tension — The movement is built on a long-held C and short arpeggios with acute punctuations of fast rhythmic cells. The tension is created by the contrast of the serene long note and the first rhythmic figuration, intensified when the rhythmic figuration accelerates.
- 2) Joy — An exuberant dance rhythm is introduced by the violin and taken up by the other instruments leading to a timpani solo. The theme is first introduced on the violin and cello, and is passed onward. After this comes a slower section starting with flute and harp. After further developments, the movement returns once again to the first section.
- 3) Hauntings — This movement is in arch form. It starts with flute and clarinet soli with trumpet on a tone row. Immediately after, the violin, cello and piano hammer an aggressive section based on the previous tone row. This leads to a long section where a melody (first heard on the trumpet) is repeated and developed juxtaposing with the tone row (in the violin and cello). Both the melody and tone row grow and accelerate, culminating in the aggression section again. The movement ends with the flute and clarinet soli, as in the beginning.

- 4) Passion — Passion music is a musical setting of the text of the Passion according to one of the four Evangelists. The movement seeks to capture the spirit inherent in Passion music.

The introduction of leaping octaves on the harp signifies the heavy footsteps of Christ while journeying towards Calvary. The next three sections remind one of Christ's threefold prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The first is introduced by cello and violin; the second by flute, clarinet and trumpet. Both times, the music becomes more and more agitated and agonizing but eventually subsides into a quiet and serene melody. In the third section, a new melody is heard on the lower register amidst the chaotic arpeggio on flute, clarinet and trumpet, signifying the tearing of the veil of the temple (cymbal clash) at the crucifixion. The movement ends with the chorale 'Heilich thut mich verlangen'. One by one, themes from previous movements appear and all tension, joy and hauntings resolve harmoniously in the sublimity for the Passion.

VARIANTS ON 'KUAN SHAN YUE'

PHOOH YEW TIEN

"Kuan Shan Yue" is a well known piece of ancient music based on a poem by the famous Tang Dynasty poet Li Po. This piece consists of a theme and 6 variants.

The sections of the piece are as follows:

Theme, *moderato*
Employs the melody line of the original piece with additional "Klangfarbenmelodie" treatment — a kind of orchestration technique that colours every individual note in the melody.

Variant I, *Andante*
Further use of the "Klangfarbenmelodie" but with more emphasis on different combinations of instruments.

Transition, *Allegro*

Variant II, *Allegro*
The harmony in this movement is derived from the melody line of the theme with rhythmic dialogues between various instruments or groups of instruments.

Transition, *Allegro*

Variant III, *Allegro*
Continuation of the dialogue between different groups of instruments in an overlapping and more transparent aspect.

Variant IV, *Piu meno mosso*
An imitation of the "Chin" (an ancient Chinese instrument) playing, with sliding effects produced by various instruments and a prominent accelerated motif recurring as an interlink.

Variant V, *Allegro non troppo*
This variant uses the "pointillistic" technique, the density and texture is then changed gradually increasing the value volume of the notes toward the end of the section.

Variant VI, *Allegro*
The Finale further combines and develops various aspects of musicality of the previous sections.

LEONG YOON PIN

"Interfusion" is written for a quintet of piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass. Structurally it is based on four thematic materials, namely, a tonal serial broken up into different segments and developed, a freely conceived pentatonic interlude, followed by two harmonic serials developed from the original row with ornate decorations for each voice on its contrapuntal entry, and in conclusion, a minimalized treatment on four groups of tones derived from the opening.

VARIATIONS FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

TSAO CHIEN

The Variations for Chamber Ensemble were written between May and September 1988. It was originally conceived as a sort of chamber concerto, where each instrument in the ensemble would be given a cadenza-like passage to play in a manner reminiscent of Big Band jazz where the principal in each instrumental group would improvise and display his prowess at his instrument in turn. The single movement work, however, was too short to be called a concerto and names like "obligatos" and "soliloquies" for chamber ensemble, all of which reflect the soloistic aspects of the work's conception, were tried and rejected. I eventually settled for the present title because the work can be construed as a set of continuous variations.

The work itself, however, sounds nothing like Big Band jazz and is not influenced by it save in outward form. Indeed, it is very loosely based on a tone-row announced by the flute in the second phrase of its opening solo, the first four notes of which form a motif of some importance. A climax is reached and a cadenza for solo cello follows. Other instruments gradually join in as the cello reminisces in its extreme high register above the treble staff. Mysterious melismata appear in the winds and these give way to a version for string quintet of the cello's melancholy song.

An extended variation with *cor anglis obbligato* follows. This strives towards a climax but eventually subsides in a frustrated duet for cello and *cor anglis* accompanied ominously by slow, repeated C's on the chimes. A sustained chord in the strings leads to an improvised heterophony of pentatonic bird-calls on flute, clarinet and violins. This texture is maintained as the horn makes a dramatic entrance with a version of the flute's opening solo, punctuated by dissonant chords on chimes, piano, harp and strings. The horn obbligato becomes increasingly more complex and virtuosic and eventually reaches a climax over spasmodic entries in the percussion.

The trumpet now takes the stage along with the horn and trombone in a passage of rapid triple-tonguing accompanied by side-drum and convulsive interjections from strings and piano. This leads to a chordal variation for brass and woodwind with timpani obbligato. Here, the timpani are made to play a variant of the underlying tone-row, ending in pulsating fortissimo chords for the whole ensemble which soon disintegrate in a catharsis of controlled improvisation. The music dies away and the opening flute solo returns over an inverted pedal A, *pianissimo* in the harp and violins punctuated by disturbing piano clusters and water gong entries. The bass clarinet has the last word as the music fades away into silence.

Some unusual instrumental effects are also used in the piece, notably the water gongs, pitch-bending in the flute and various inside-the-piano effects.

The Ensemble of the New Music Forum II

Conductor: LIM YAU

Seow Jin Chong	Violin
Chin Chee Mee	Violin
Lim Soon Lee	Viola
Zhao Yu Er	Cello
Karen Yeo	Double Bass
Lee Chuan	Flute
Jost Flach	Oboe
Vincent Goh	Clarinet
Zhang Jin Min	Bassoon
Adalene Teo	Horn
Pek Sin Chuan	Trumpet
Chong Shoo Mei	Trombone
Lim Meng Kih	Percussion
Shane Tho	Piano/Celesta
Yuko Hinokawa	Harp

A

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