

# Program for Evening Concert

**6 December 2016**

**7:30pm – 8:30pm**

**Mandarin Ballroom 2, Level 6**

**Mandarin Orchard Hotel**

**Arnold Schoenberg : Verklärte Nacht Op.4**

----- Intermission -----

**Robert Schumann : Piano Quartet in Eb major Op.47**

**Sostenuto assai – Allegro ma non troppo**

**Scherzo. Molto vivace**

**Andante cantabile**

**Vivace**

## Arnold Schoenberg : Verklärte Nacht Op.4

Although most (in)famous today for inventing serialism – a compositional technique utilising tone rows consisting of all twelve pitches of the scale – Arnold Schoenberg was never formally trained in music. The main breadwinner of his family from a very young age, Schoenberg taught himself by studying music scores, and also gained practical experience at an amateur music society “Polyhymnia”, where he met the composer Alexander von Zemlinsky. Up to this point, Schoenberg had idolised Brahms and his music but Zemlinsky introduced the young Schoenberg to the music of Wagner and Richard Strauss; and their influence can be keenly felt in Schoenberg’s earliest compositions.

*Verklärte Nacht* was written in just three weeks in 1899 while Schoenberg was on vacation with Zemlinsky and Zemlinsky’s sister Mathilde (later to become Schoenberg’s first wife). Originally scored for an ensemble of two violins, two violas and two cellos, it is based on a poem of the same title by Richard Dehmel. Schoenberg would later write in a letter to Dehmel:

“... your poems have had a decisive influence on my development as a composer. They were what first made me try to find a new tone in the lyrical mood. Or rather, I found it even without looking, simply by reflecting in music what your poems stirred up in me.”

Dehmel was no less complimentary to Schoenberg:

“Yesterday evening I heard your ‘Transfigured Night’, and I should consider it a sin of omission if I failed to say a word of thanks to you for your wonderful sextet. I had intended to follow the motives of my text in your composition; but I soon forgot to do so, I was so enthralled by the music.”

In fact, Schoenberg’s music does follow quite closely the structure of Dehmel’s poem, with five main sections. The opening depicts two people (a couple) walking through a “bleak, cold, moonlit grove”; the woman confesses to her companion that she is carrying the child of another man; she walks on in despair, certain of his rejection; the man reassures her and declares that their love will transfigure the unborn child and make it theirs; and with this outpouring of love the night is also transformed and transfigured as they walk together in the “exalted, shining night”.

Although firmly established as an important work in the canon today, *Verklärte Nacht* had initially met with fierce opposition. As Schoenberg recalls, “the first performance ... ended in a riot and in actual fights. And not only did some persons in the audience utter their opinions with their fists, but critics also used their fists instead of their pens.” There were many reasons for this resistance – for some, it was the explicit sexuality of the original poem and the portrayal of this offensive and liberal aesthetic; for others, it was the complex textures and daring harmonies of the music (a reviewer for the Vienna Musicians Union wrote that “[it is] as if the score of Tristan had been smeared while the ink was still wet”). Yet the furore provided us with some of the best retorts to criticism – when an uncomprehending critic compared the work to “the sort of six-legged calf one might see in a side-show!”, Schoenberg drily replied that a string sextet would make for a “twelve-legged calf!”; and when the Vienna Music Society rejected the work based on one ‘nonexistent’ (ie., uncategorized and therefore unpermitted) chord, Schoenberg remarked “and thus [it] can never be performed since one cannot perform that which does not exist”.

Still, the work did eventually gain acceptance such that by 1917, Schoenberg was able to offer to publishers a version for string orchestra, while in 1932 Eduard Steuermann, pianist and student of Schoenberg, also transcribed it for piano trio.

## **Verklärte Nacht**

Richard Dehmel

Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain;  
der Mond läuft mit, sie schaun hinein.  
Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen;  
kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht,  
in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen.  
Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht:

Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir,  
ich geh in Sünde neben Dir.  
Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen.  
Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück  
und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen  
nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück  
und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht,  
da ließ ich schauernd mein Geschlecht  
von einem fremden Mann umfängen,  
und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet.  
Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt:  
nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet.

Sie geht mit ungelenkem Schritt.  
Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit.  
Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht.  
Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht:

Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast,  
sei Deiner Seele keine Last,  
o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert!  
Es ist ein Glanz um alles her;  
Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer,  
doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert  
von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich.  
Die wird das fremde Kind verklären,  
Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären;  
Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht,  
Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht.

Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften.  
Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften.  
Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

## ***Transfigured Night***

English translation by Stanley Appelbaum

Two people walk through a bare, cold grove;  
The moon races along with them, they look into it.  
The moon races over tall oaks,  
No cloud obscures the light from the sky,  
Into which the black points of the boughs reach.  
A woman's voice speaks:

I'm carrying a child, and not yours,  
I walk in sin beside you.  
I have committed a great offense against myself.  
I no longer believed I could be happy  
And yet I had a strong yearning  
For something to fill my life, for the joys of Motherhood  
And for duty; so I committed an effrontery,  
So, shuddering, I allowed my sex  
To be embraced by a strange man,  
And, on top of that, I blessed myself for it.  
Now life has taken its revenge:  
Now I have met you, oh, you.

She walks with a clumsy gait,  
She looks up; the moon is racing along.  
Her dark gaze is drowned in light.  
A man's voice speaks:

May the child you conceived  
Be no burden to your soul;  
Just see how brightly the universe is gleaming!  
There's a glow around everything;  
You are floating with me on a cold ocean,  
But a special warmth flickers  
From you into me, from me into you.  
It will transfigure the strange man's child.  
You will bear the child for me, as if it were mine;  
You have brought the glow into me,  
You have made me like a child myself.

He grasps her around her ample hips.  
Their breath kisses in the breeze.  
Two people walk through the lofty, bright night.

## Robert Schumann : Piano Quartet in Eb major Op.47

Robert Schumann's compositional output follows a rather peculiar pattern – having written exclusively for the piano until 1839, his marriage to Clara Wieck in 1840 saw an astonishing burst of creativity where he composed nearly 150 *Lieder* (songs) in a single year. The following year he turned his attention to the orchestra, and produced three large-scale works including the Symphony No.1 and the first version of what would be the Symphony No.4.

This almost obsessive fixation with a single genre of music was to continue in 1842, which has been called his Year of Chamber Music. While Clara, herself a very accomplished pianist, was on a successful concert tour, Robert busied himself studying the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; and upon her return composed in quick succession three string quartets, a piano trio, a piano quintet, and finally the piano quartet performed tonight.

In an entry from Clara's diary from April 1843: "In the evening we played Robert's E-flat major Quartet ... and I was again truly delighted at this beautiful and so youthful work." Indeed the optimism and exuberance of this work is clear from the very beginning with both primary themes in the first movement featuring a rising contour, as if constantly striving and pursuing a lofty goal.

The mercurial *Scherzo* full of nervous energy is offset by two contrasting interludes or "*Trios*" much more lyrical and charming in nature, and this is followed by a most beautiful slower movement – a song without words in all but name – the last few measures of which contain a pre-echo of the main motif of the finale.

Much more vigorous than the preceding two movements, the contrapuntal texture of the finale sees all four instruments in equal partnership in a kind of musical conversation, with a final affirmative resolution.



*Violinist:* [LEE SHI MEI](#)

Lee Shi Mei received her Master of Music with Distinction in Violin Performance at the Longy School of Music, USA; she was awarded the Roman Totenberg Award for stellar academic and artistic achievement at the same time. Shi Mei also holds a Bachelor of Music in Violin and Piano Performance at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, USA. She is a recipient of the National Arts Council Arts Bursary (2007, 2009-2011).

2nd Prize winner in the National Violin and Piano Competition 2007, Violin Artist Category in Singapore, Shi Mei went on to perform as violin soloist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra at the President's Young Performers Concert 2008.

Shi Mei's passion for chamber music led her to perform with the Lyrica String Ensemble in New Jersey, 2009. Her quartet's rendition of the Arensky String Quartet won the hearts of its audience at LyricaFest 2010. In 2012, she was invited to perform chamber music at the Bowdoin International Music Festival as a Performing Associate Fellow in the studio of Mikhail Kopelman. Last January, Shi Mei fulfilled her longtime dream by performing the complete Brahms Violin Sonatas with Singaporean pianist Lim Yan at the Esplanade Recital Studio.

Apart from the standard repertory, Shi Mei has premiered many new chamber works in the US, as well as in Singapore, the most recent being Quartet for Trio by Singaporean composer Tan Chan Boon at the Esplanade Recital Studio in January 2014, as well as award-winning compositions at the inaugural Singapore Asian Composer Festival 2015. Earlier this year, Shi Mei was invited to perform contemporary compositions by Hong Kong composer Clarence Mak and Australian composer Damien Ricketson at the 3rd Pacific Alliance of Music Schools (PAMS) Summit and Music Festival at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

As an orchestra musician, Shi Mei has performed with the Oberlin Conservatory Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, New York. She is a regular freelance musician with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and performed with the SSO at the London BBC Proms 2015. Shi Mei regularly appears as Concertmaster of re: mix ensemble, the Metropolitan Festival Orchestra and Re:Sound Collective. She was also guest concertmaster of The Chamber Players in 2015.

Shi Mei currently teaches violin at the School of the Arts Singapore, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, and Forte Musicademy. She continues to draw inspiration from her music mentors: her aunt Jacqueline Anne Lee, Laura Bossert, Ong Lip Tat, Jin Li, Timothy Ku, Sanford Margolis, and Marilyn McDonald.



**Violist: [LIM CHUN](#)**

Lim Chun was a principal violist for both the Singapore Youth Orchestra and the Asian Youth Orchestra before he began his studies at the Peabody Institute of Music at the age of 17, where on a full-scholarship, he received his bachelor and master degrees. His teacher was Joseph de Pasquale, and he had also participated in the masterclasses of Emanuel Vardi, Roberto Diaz and Heidi Castleman. During his

second year at Peabody, he was given an award for his outstanding achievements as a violist. That same year, he began to freelance in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, playing under the batons of David Zinman, James Depreist, and Yuri Temirkanov.

Chun had performed chamber music at the United Nations and the White House, toured China and Korea as soloist in Richard Strauss' Don Quixote with Yo Yo Ma under the direction of Sergiu Comissiona, and had played Walton's Viola Concerto with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra under Lim Yau.

After his national service, Chun went onto Yale University on a full-scholarship to study with Jesse Levine. A few months into his studies at Yale, he was handpicked by Lorin Maazel and became a founding member of his Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana, the resident orchestra of the opera theatre, the Palau de les Arts, in Valencia, Spain. There he had worked with Zubin Mehta (director of the theatre's summer festival), Placido Domingo, Valery Gergiev, and Georges Pretre. In addition to being a member of the viola section, he also had chances to serve as principal or assistant principal on a few occasions, including performances of Rossini's L'italiana in Algeri, in which he led the violas for the noted Rossini specialist, Alberto Zedda.

He was the viola principal of the Asian Youth Alumni Orchestra for the Asian Youth Orchestra's 20th anniversary celebration in Hong Kong, 2010.

Lim Chun relocated back to Singapore in the summer of 2014, and has been active with both the viola and the violin across various musical genres. In 2015, he played the world premiere of local composer Chen Zhangyi's Viola Concerto and also Bruch's Double Concerto with the NUSSO under the direction of Lim Soon Lee. He coaches the viola sections of the National University of Singapore Symphony Orchestra and the Singapore National Youth Orchestra. His violin playing can be heard in many local productions, including the theme songs of the drama series "Crescendo", Xinyao documentary "The Songs We Sang", and the upcoming movie "My Love, Sinema". He is currently on the faculty of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.



**Cellist: [LIN JUAN](#)**

Lin Juan graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with both Bachelor and Masters degrees in cello performance. His principal teachers include Bernard Gregor-Smith, Jo Cole and Zhao Yu Er. In 2009 he was awarded the RNCM Haworth Prize for Cello.

Juan is a regular Principal Cellist of the Singapore Lyric Opera Orchestra and The Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as a freelance cellist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. He has also led the RNCM Symphony, Opera and Chamber Orchestras, and was invited to the Britten Pears Orchestra in its 2008 Aldeburgh Festival season. In Germany he was a member of the Baroque ensemble BAKLAVA, and was CoPrincipal cellist of the RNCM Sinfonia, resident orchestra at the 34th Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte di Montepulciano, Italy. He has also given solo and chamber recitals in Germany, Italy, Japan and UK.

Juan has since been featured in solo appearances that has seen him collaborate with The Philharmonic Orchestra, re:mix, Ding Yi Music Company, Wild Rice and The Arts Fission Company. He is also active in chamber music performances, appearing regularly with established Singaporean and international musicians.

Juan has been on the cello faculty at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts since 2013 and is also Music Director of Raffles Institution String Ensemble and Baroque Ensemble. In 2016 Juan was appointed assistant conductor of the Singapore National Youth Orchestra.



*Pianist:* [LIM YAN](#)

2006 Young Artist Award recipient Lim Yan started playing the piano at the age of five and was a student of Ms Lim Tshui Ling before leaving for Manchester in 1993. There, he attended Chetham's School of Music under the tutelage of first David Hartigan and later Ronan O'Hora, who was also his tutor at the University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music.

A seasoned recitalist and concerto soloist, Yan's performances have taken him all over Europe and Asia. He has given two recitals at the Cheltenham Festival and played concert tours in Serbia with the Belgrade Radio Orchestra and in Sweden with Vågus. In Bacau, Romania, he collaborated with the "Mihail Jora" Philharmonic; in Hanoi with the Vietnam National Symphony Orchestra; and at the 2010 Beijing International Piano Festival he worked with the China Radio-Film Symphony Orchestra. When the Singapore National Youth Orchestra was invited to the 2011 Aberdeen International Youth Festival, he was the soloist in Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.2.

Nearer home, Yan has appeared with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in such works as Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Grieg's Piano Concerto. He was also the soloist for the visit of the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in April 2009. Over the course of three concerts in June 2012, he completed a cycle of all five Beethoven Piano Concertos as well as the Triple Concerto with Grace Lee and Lin Juan, together with The Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Lim Yau; and also performed the Choral Fantasy as part of the Esplanade's tenth anniversary celebrations later that year.

Currently based in Singapore, Yan has been on the faculty at the School of the Arts since its inception in 2008. He also teaches at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts as well as the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.