

LISTENING ROOM 9

Sat 31.7.2021
@osage

PATHS

REMEMBRANCE

HKNME
osage

Edwin Wong

Shelley Ng

Photo credit: Cheung Chi Wai @Moon9 Image

Photo credit: Tsz To Wong

14:00-15:00

Curated by trumpeter EDWIN WONG, **PATHS** is a showcase of the trumpet's versatility, through solo and chamber works written throughout the ages. Includes the world premiere of two new works by Hong Kong composers JUSTIN WONG & KENNETH TAM.

ADMISSION FREE
RSVP NEEDED

Full programme & registration at
<https://www.hongkongnewmusic.org/paths-remembrance>

16:00-17:30

REMEMBRANCE explores the fine line between life and death, capturing moments of blossoming and withering. Featuring pianist SHELLEY NG, the recital showcases solo and chamber works by Takemitsu, Knussen, and Smetana, among others.

4/F, 20 Hing Yip Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon

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HKNME Emerging Artists are supported by the Artistic Internship Scheme under the Hong Kong Arts Development Council

LISTENING ROOM #9 [Part I]

31st July 2021 | 1400

Paths

Toru TAKEMITSU

Paths (1994) for solo trumpet

George ANTHEEL

Sonata (1951) for trumpet & piano

Justin WONG

Escaping through the inexistent door (2020) for solo trumpet in C (world première)

Andy AKIHO

the rAy's end (2008) for trumpet, violin & steel pan

Ka-shu Kenneth TAM

Woozy (2020) for clarinet, trumpet, violin & viola (world première)

Anthony PLOG

Excerpts from *Concert Duets* (1980) for two trumpets

Angus Lee (conductor)

Linus Fung (clarinet)

Edwin Wong (trumpet)^

Kinson Chan (trumpet)*

Matthew Lau (percussion)

Linda Yim (piano)

Ning-yi Wei (violin)*

William Lane (viola)

^ HKNME Emerging Artists

* Guest musician

LISTENING ROOM #9 [Part II]

31st July 2021 | 1600

Remembrance

Katherine BALCH

Two Memories (2020) for solo piano

Oliver KNUSSSEN

Sonya's Lullaby (Op.16; 1979) for piano

Bedřich SMETANA

Piano Trio in G minor (Op.15; 1855) for violin, cello & piano

John LENNON & Paul MCCARTNEY, arr. Toru TAKEMITSU

Golden Slumbers (1992) for piano

Rachel C. WALKER

Fu ou (2016) for solo piano

Shulamit RAN

Birkat Haderekh - Blessing for the Road (2015) for clarinet, violin, cello & piano

George ROCHBERG

Ricordanza (1972) soliloquy for cello & piano

Linus Fung (clarinet)

Shelley Ng (piano)^

Euna Kim (violin)

Ning-yi Wei (violin)*

Tsz-to Wong (cello)*

^ HKNME Emerging Artists

* Guest musician

Overview

Reaching out to our musicians to broaden the ensemble's musical scope has always been an important part of Hong Kong New Music Ensemble's programming strategy. With our current season's vision of **OUT:reach**, the HKNME offers its young musicians *carte blanche* in curating a themed recital. **Paths / Remembrance** is the first fruits of this initiative, spearheaded by trumpeter Edwin Wong and pianist Shelley Ng, musicians under the HKNME Emerging Artist Scheme, supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

1400

PATHS (curated by Edwin Wong)

We all have to make decisions on our life paths, and we could never predict where our paths would lead us to. Sometimes we struggle for a resolution to the frustrations in reality; while sometimes we reminisce about fond memories in the past. Nonetheless, life goes on and we have to live our days and make choices in life. We would sometimes neglect that, what matters is the scenery along the paths, rather than the final destination.

PATHS explores a musical journey from failed attempts for a resolution to an introspective reminiscence. This chamber recital features the trumpet's versatility in solo and chamber works by Takemitsu, Antheil, Akiho, and Plog, as well as the world première of new works by local composers Justin Wong and Kenneth Tam.

Toru Takemitsu: *Paths* (1994) | [Notes adapted from Marco Blaauw](#)

Written two years before the composer's own death, *Paths*, subtitled *In Memoriam Witold Lutosławski*, is a melancholic obituary for the great Polish composer. In many cultures around the world, including Japanese culture and Western classical music tradition, the trumpet often appears at the gate between life and death. The trumpet, or its precursors such as the conch shell, animal horn, or didgeridoo, are often used to call out to the living, honoring the human who passed and announcing the transformation of spirit.

Paths starts off with a gentle lament in an almost incomprehensible rhythm and harmony in the muted trumpet. The sound of this Harmon mute reminds us immediately of the great jazz legend Miles Davis playing a soft ballad, but it also takes us to the traditional music of the *shakuhachi*, the ancient Japanese end-blown flute made of bamboo. Only when the trumpet suddenly shines forth without the mute, answering its own question, do we get a sense of grounding and harmony. The open sound of the trumpet is more heroic and filled with hope. The following muted passage confirms the structure of this solo piece: The introspective ballad of the muted trumpet is contrasted by the expressive lines of the open trumpet, as if Takemitsu brings his internal dialog to sound, allowing ample space and time for reminiscence in this solemn obituary.

George Antheil: Sonata for Trumpet and Piano (1951)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Dolce-espressivo
- III. Scherzo: Vivace
- IV. Allegretto - Allegro - Allegro molto

Casted in the convention of four movements, the first movement gently opens with the trumpet's flowing melody over the stream of arpeggiated piano chords. The movement develops into a more contrapuntal, agitated and dissonant middle section before the reprise of the opening theme near the end. The second movement features a distant and sweet sound from a muted trumpet, and a placid, song-like quality with underlying disturbance from some brief periods of bitonality. The vigorous Scherzo movement challenges both the trumpeter's and pianist's stamina with minimal break in the music and constantly running sixteenth notes. The light-hearted finale gives us some hints for its inspiration from jazz and ragtime music. Syncopations and galloping gestures, which are derived from the musical materials of the first movement, prevail in the movement, and the Sonata gives its joyous finish in the good old C major.

Justin Wong: *Escaping through the inexistent door* (2020) | Notes by the composer

In times that we need to escape from the external reality to ponder on our life, we often cannot find an exit to our own asylum. The composition describes the process of fear, of frustration, of disappointment and of despair. Circulated around a half-diminished extended tertian sonority, the trumpet would embark on a journey to fail attaining the desired major triad and with microtones to highlight the sorrowful lament.

Andy Akiho: *the rAy's end* (2008) | Notes by the composer

the rAy's end was written in March 2008 specifically for a trio called the Andes. This group was originally formed because we were friends with the same first name: Andie Springer on Violin, Andy Kozar on Trumpet, and myself, Andy Akiho on Steel Pan. The title of this work, *the rAy's end*, can be rearranged to spell out "three Andys." Although we did not start playing music together until well after we met, we soon realized the potential for the unique combination of timbres between our instruments. This original and uncharted sound gave me the inspiration for our debut piece. It was an inspiring challenge to combine these sounds together, because all three instruments encompass a similar range of pitches. While each instrument is extremely unique as a solo sound, the combined timbres create an amazing homogenous texture. My inspiration for this piece came from observing the swells and changing textures of light created by the rays of the sun. However, I would like to leave it up to the individual listeners to interpret the piece on their own and to hopefully enjoy it.

Vibraphone is used instead of steel pan for today's performance.

Ka Shu Kenneth Tam: *Wozy* (2020)) | Notes by the composer

History has entered into an era where loads of information are being pushed out unceasingly. Being passively struck by parcels of trashy information has become our daily routine. We are spoon-fed with overabundant unwanted data, not knowing what is true and what is false. Eventually, our mind enters a transient state that is almost like having a woozy hallucination. How should we situate ourselves in this weird time? Are we able to isolate ourselves from this information overflow? Or, should we try getting along with the current situation?

Anthony Plog: Selections from *10 Concert Duets* (1980)

1. Fanfare
2. Pastoral
6. Toccata
4. Dialogue

The energetic repeated notes in irregular time kick off the Fanfare with some virtuosic noodling of clustered sixteenth notes in the middle of the movement. Pastoral evokes a serene and catabile quality of the set with the muted trumpets with a clear established tonality. Toccata is a playful imitative game between the duo after a wake up call from the dreamy Pastoral. The two trumpets exchange conversations in Dialogue, which alternates between a broad singing line and secco-articulated passages in a strict groove. The duo combines and finishes off brilliantly with some highly syncopated and quasi-jazz influenced gestures.

REMEMBRANCE (curated by Shelley Ng)

The concert is inspired by my experience performing *Sonya's Lullaby*, written by Oliver Knussen for his four-month old daughter Sonya in 1978. Oliver Knussen passed away in 2018 and in the following year I played the piece in his tribute concert with the presence of Sonya. Her tears made me realise how the music had become a time capsule of love from his father. Some memories are related to emotions so complicated that cannot be described by words, nor could they be fully understood even by people closest to us. How do composers digest and express their emotions? When someone is not around anymore, do we feel this person's presence through vibrations?

The concert alternates between celebration of life with Takemitsu's arrangement of *Golden Slumbers*, Knussen's *Sonya's Lullaby* and the depiction of fragility of life in Walker's *Fu Ou* and mourning of death in Smetana's *Piano Trio*. In addition to Balch's *Two Memories*, the collage of memories resembles people coming into and leaving our lives, and evokes the listener to observe how each memory influences the perception of other memories. The concert closes with Rán's *Birkat Haderekb* and Rochberg's *Ricordanza*. Would we rather not have painful memories at all, or can we find hope and common humanity when we experience the fragility of life?

Katherine Balch: *Two Memories* | Notes by the composer

Albert Cano-Smit and I were roommates for two years in New York before the pandemic hit in March 2020. *Two Memories* is a sort of inverted before-after of our time together, and the dramatic shift in the energy of our apartment during those Spring months. The first movement is a very simple chorale reflecting on the sudden frozenness and stillness of our respective musical worlds that Spring. The second movement is an explosive portrait of the fast-paced tempo of our lives before the pandemic: zipping in and out of the apartment, to this rehearsal, that concert, and is also a nod to Albert's expert rendering of Ligeti's Devil's Staircase etude (no. 13). I hope these short pieces capture something of what I find so special about Albert's musical personality: his attention to detail, his parsing of textural layers, and his buzzing virtuosity.

Oliver Knussen: *Sonya's Lullaby* | Notes by the composer

The word Lullaby is used in the sense of an incantation to sleep; Sonya is my daughter, who was a four-month-old insomniac in October 1977 when the first sketch of this piece was written. Formally the music is, I hope, self-explanatory -- but perhaps it is worth mentioning that an initial stimulus toward the piano writing was the harmonic exploitation of overtones produced from the lowest register of the instrument by composers as diverse as Brahms, Scriabin, Copland and Carter. *Sonya's Lullaby* is the central panel for my chamber music Triptych (the other two being *Autumnal* for violin and piano and *Cantata* for oboe and string trio) and was written for the composer-pianist Michael Finnissy, who gave the first performance of the final version in Amsterdam, January 1979.

Bedřich Smetana: *Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 15*

The *Piano Trio in G minor* was written by 30-year-old Smetana in memory of his daughter Bedřiška who died of scarlet fever when she was four. Smetana was particularly fond of Bedřiška because she was exceptionally gifted. The composer wrote in his diary “Nothing can replace Fritz...the angel whom death has stolen from us.” The emotionally intense first movement opens with a yearning theme on the violin. The dotted rhythm adds tremendous pain to the weeping intervals. According to the composer, the tender second theme that follows alludes to a tune Bedřiška loved. Throughout the movement, the dark and light materials constantly transform and alternate, juxtaposing grief with memories of his graceful daughter.

The scherzo seems to depict different facets of the child with a nostalgic tinge. Following the energetic opening, a dreamy, wistfully lyrical *alternative* begins with a luscious swaying melody. The second *alternative* is lofty and dignified in dotted rhythms. It becomes luminous then grows to an outpouring of bright light, perhaps a vision of his daughter had she grown to a woman and the overwhelming joy she had brought to her father.

The opening of the finale is taken almost note for note from the final movement of the composer’s earlier *Piano Sonata in G minor*. The agitated “gallop” inevitably reminds us of Schubert’s *Erlking* where a father races on horseback, desperately fleeing death as it reaches for his son. Between episodes of frantic motion, Smetana interweaves a beautiful, melancholic elegy. Suddenly pulled back to reality, the daughters’ theme from the first movement is revealed stripped of ornament. The dotted rhythm that was once illuminated by the nobility of his daughter metamorphoses into a stately funeral march. From this solemn dotted rhythm further rises a profoundly regal section in major key, creating a stark contrast to what preceded it. The piece concludes with an affirmation and consolation of what this tragedy could not take away.

J. Lennon, P. McCartney, arr. Toru Takemitsu: *Golden Slumbers*

The popular song *Golden Slumbers*, written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, was released on the Beatles’ Album “*Abbey Road*” in 1969. “*Golden Slumbers*” is based on the poem “*Cradle Song*” from the play *Patient Grissel*, a ballad by the Elizabethan poet and dramatist Thomas Dekker (1570-1632). McCartney saw the sheet music for “*Cradle Song*” on the piano at his father’s home and created his own music for the poem. The arrangement by Toru Takemitsu (1930-1986) was published by Schott Music Tokyo to commemorate the anniversary of his death in 2016.

Rachel C. Walker: *Fu’ou* | Notes by the composer

浮沕 (*fu’ou*) explores transience through distilling traces of color, resonance, and rhythm against panes of silence. It is dedicated to pianist Liu Haoran 劉浩然.

Shulamit Ran: *Birkat Haderekh – Blessing for the Road* | Notes by the composer

Birkat Haderekh – Hebrew for "Blessing for the Road" – begins its journey as a spacious, gently inflected solo clarinet melody, slowly unfolding as it gathers the other members of this clarinet quartet around itself, carving out a distinctive musical "space." Looking at this piece in its totality, the opening phrase is, at some level, emblematic of the entire piece, as this single-movement composition of approximately 8 minutes can be heard as one extended, gradually evolving melody. At around midpoint of the piece, though, where the clarinet assumes the solo line again, this melody takes something of a turn. With just a small melodic twist, the music takes on an imploring quality, almost in the spirit of an invocation, gradually increasing in urgency, thus becoming a form of prayer—its potential perhaps hinted at, but not necessarily self-evident, in the opening statement. In my own mind while composing the piece, and no longer just thinking in the strictly musical terms of the formation and development of sound shaped in time, the piece became, for all of its modest proportions, a parable of one of life's journeys. I found myself thinking of the array of conflicting emotions associated with preparing for a voyage, destination uncertain, of someone precious. Anticipation, anxiousness, longing, hope—all mingle together. Perhaps it is a mother praying for her child's well-being; a small, private ritual that cuts across time and place, speaking to our common humanity.

George Rochberg: *Ricordanza – Soliloquy for Cello and Piano* | Notes by the composer

After 1963, the year of my last twelve-tone piece, I began a slow, sometimes arduous approach to the tonal language, believing that a 20th century composer should be free to reach out in the widest possible circumference, as far as his ears and mind could stretch. I was (and remain) firmly convinced that the very survival of music as a humanly expressive art requires a renewal of its craft through an immersion in the traditions of the past which, for a time, seemed to have been overwhelmed by the developments of 20th century music. The Ricordanza was one of the results of this process. Ricordanza, which is dedicated to the memory of my nephew, Robert Rochberg, is a commentary on the opening cello statement of Beethoven's C Major Cello Sonata, Op. 102 No. 1. The form of the Ricordanza is a simple ABA, the first section in A major, the second in F, the third beginning in D-flat and completing itself in A Major. The opening and closing portions belong primarily to the cello cantinela (although the piano part has its own clearly made melodic design), the middle section develops a close dialogue between the cello and piano. The character of this work is romantic.

BIOGRAPHIES

EDWIN WONG is a versatile performer and educator based in Hong Kong. Edwin has performed with numerous orchestras and ensembles, including the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hong Kong New Music Ensemble. With his keen interest in period instrument performance of Baroque music, Edwin was featured as the baroque trumpet soloist in Rutgers Baroque Players' concert. In 2019, Edwin attended the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he received coaching and performed in masterclasses by the members of American Brass Quintet, Thomas Hooten, and Raymond Mase. Edwin holds a Master of Music degree in trumpet performance at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Music degree at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His primary teachers include Kenneth DeCarlo and Christopher Moyse.

Internationally acclaimed pianist **SHELLEY NG** has performed as a soloist and in chamber ensembles on three continents. A devoted musician of varied interests, Shelley has been pushing her limits as a pianist. She is a committed performer of contemporary music and has performed works including the piano solo for John Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, and Thomas Adès' *Asyla* under the composer's baton. Shelley is a laureate of international competitions such as the Grand Prize Virtuoso International Music Competition (Salzburg) and Eleonore Schoenfeld International String Competition. She appeared as a soloist with the Hong Kong Symphonic Winds and Hong Kong Medical Association Orchestra. <https://www.shelleyngyc.com/>

Established in 2010, **SIGMA** is an extension of Osage Group's activities. The name comes from the Greek letter, Σ. Just as the symbol is used in mathematics to indicate the sum of all operations, Sigma is a project based in addition and continually provides supplementary programs and services to the Osage Group. Sigma is an experimental platform, allowing it to expand and include artistic and cultural ideas and projects that fall outside the purview of Osage Gallery and Osage Art Foundation.

THE LISTENING ROOM presented six editions in 2009-2010 at Osage Soho, bringing together local and international adventurous music makers from the worlds of contemporary classical, jazz, sound art, electronic music and more. 10 years later in the midst of a global pandemic, the needs of the local music scene have changed. **THE LISTENING ROOM** in its 2020-21 edition aims to be a nurturing outpost for progressive and thought-provoking sonic experiences, presenting a monthly dialogue between audiences and practitioners to explore a wide range of rarely-heard (mostly) acoustic contemporary classical music. In an environment that encourages deep listening and fluid dialogue, performances will be followed by an open workshop for musicians, composers and/or artists, to support the ongoing creation and presentation of new innovative work.

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Founded in 2008 by William Lane, the **HONG KONG NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE** (HKNME) is Asia's leading new music group, dedicated to presenting contemporary music to the highest possible standard. The Ensemble has led numerous world and regional premieres of important contemporary works — a number of which commissioned by the HKNME — at prestigious music festivals and venues around the world, including the Hong Kong Arts Festival, New Vision Arts Festival (HK), Tongyeong International Music Festival / ISCM (South Korea), ECHOFLUXX Festival of New Media (Czech Republic), CYCLE Music and Art Festival (Iceland), Shanghai New Music Week (CN), Beijing Music Festival (CN), Hong Kong Week (TW), MONA FOMA (Australia), Hong Kong Music Series (London), Angel Orensanz Center (New York City) and Wilsey Center for Opera (San Francisco). The HKNME has been annually funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council since 2012.

www.hongkongnewmusic.org