**PROGRAMME NOTES**

The idea of creating a chamber music concert which centers around the trumpet is certainly unorthodox. After all, the chromatically homogeneous keyed/valved trumpet that we know today wasn’t even invented until the mid-19th century, an innovation that is largely credited to the Austrian virtuoso trumpet player Anton Weidinger. Today, the modern trumpet, under the hands of a virtuoso, can create not only the strongest and most heroic tones which we typically associate with the trumpet, but also the softest and most lyrical timbres; this makes for an instrument that is curiously wonderful for chamber music.

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丹第 Vincent d’indy (1851-1931)

*Suite dans le style ancien* (Duration: 16 min)

Vincent d’indy’s “Suite dans le style ancien” for 2 flutes, trumpet, 2 violins, viola, cello, and bass represents an early attempt to incorporate the diverse characteristics of the trumpet in a chamber music setting. The composer was tremendously proud of the work, which combined ancient dance forms with romantic musical sentiments. The piece was composed for La Trompette, a chamber music society founded in 1861 to propagate chamber music in Paris, so it was only appropriate that we include this piece in our programme, which mirrors the work of Ensemble Virama in Kuala Lumpur in the 21st century.

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柯普蘭 Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

*Quiet City* (Duration: 10 min)

We like to think that a musical composition is complete if it survives in the form of an autograph manuscript; this cannot be further from the truth. Take Johann Sebastian Bach for instance, who often reworks old material to cope with new obligations, or even Malaysian composer Yeo Chow Shern, whose “Celebration and Dances” has been re-orchestrated several times to reach different audiences of diverse cultural backgrounds. Aaron Copland was no stranger to this practice, and in 1940 he reworked Quiet City, incidental music for a play, into this version that you hear tonight. The main motive, according to Copland, was to expand on the themes of the original play, putting into a musical narrative the story of removing one’s original identity for material gains. Given the abstract nature of the music, it has grown over the decades to better represent the sound of melancholy and rhetoric, represented through instrumental dialogue. Often referred to as the “Dean of American Composers”, Copland is also well known for his wealth of writing, such as the book, “What To Listen For In Music”.

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湯斯曼 Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986)

*Divertimento* (Duration: 10 min)

Alexandre Tansman’s “Divertimento” for oboe, clarinet, trumpet, cello and piano is a relatively unknown and under performed composition. Amusingly, when I ordered the music from a distributor, his much better known Divertimento for orchestra was accidentally sent to me instead. To my knowledge, no commercial recording of the piece exists. Written in 1944, and dedicated to Arnold Schoenberg, the trademark sound of Tansman’s language is evident in this rhythmically exciting and harmonically colorful piece of chamber music. Tansman’s music is strangely absent from the repertoire today; his music was so popular in the 1940’s that there were an estimated 500 performances annually, championed by some of the most illustrious names of the Western musical world. Tansman made an unprecedented artistic tour around the world in the 1930’s, which included a stopover in Malaya - for this wonderful fact, and for the music’s attractive nature, we place this wonderful piece in today’s programme.

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艾維斯 Charles Ives (1874-1954)

*The Unanswered Question* (Duration: 7 min)

Three parties are represented on stage in Charles Ives’ highly theatrical composition. A group of strings creates a quiet and distant bed of sound, while a solo trumpet poses “questions of existence”, against which a quartet of woodwinds attempt to provide answers, to no avail. Like Copland, heard earlier in the programme, Ives is often regarded as the leading American composer of art music of the 20th century. Charles Ives’ music is often better experienced than explained, and in this spirit, we titled our concert tour with this seminal and modernist masterpiece.

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聖桑 Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Septet for Piano, Trumpet & Strings Op.65 (Duration: 18 min)

Like d’indy’s “Suite”, Camille Saint-Saëns’ Septuor in E-flat Major, Op. 65, scored for trumpet, piano and string quintet was also created for La Trompette. The septet inspired d’indy’s tribute to the past, and contains a similar structure inspired by 17th century French dances. Many observers of the time, including the composer himself, greatly admired the work and considered it a brilliant success. The work balances a curious orchestration with what one might consider to be brilliant musical pastiche. Today, it is considered an often neglected and under appreciated masterpiece of the iconic composer.

Curious music lovers will be delighted to know that his eternal Le carnaval des animaux (a permanent success that resulted in great displeasure to the composer), was also written for the same society.

Programme Notes by Howard Ng

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