



TAPESTRIES

PIANO RECITAL BY SOPHIA LIM

SUNDAY, 25 AUGUST 2024

TUN HAMDAN MINI THEATRE, YAYASAN SABAH

WORKSHOP

2:00PM

RECITAL

3:30PM

Featuring works by Debussy,
Godowsky, Schumann and more

Workshop + Recital

RM100 | RM75*

Recital Only

RM55 | RM40*

*member's price

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Sophia Lim

piano

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Sabah, Sophia Lim is a Malaysian pianist currently based in London. She had studied under the tutelage of Danny Driver at the Royal College of Music, London, where she achieved First Class in Bachelor of Music (Hons). Prior to her education in London, Sophia studied with her mentor, Krzysztof Slomiak, in Kota Kinabalu. Her experiences learning the erhu, as well as growing up in Sabah greatly enriched her insight and musical versatility through the influence of diverse cultures.

Sophia has premiered several new works on the piano and erhu, including a piano work with electronics On Manhattan Avenue by composer Ben Munro. She also recorded and collaborated on the piece Urban Luminescence by Ben Munro for the erhu and tongue drum. Highlights include her performances in FestivAll 2023 'From Takemitsu to Miku', celebrating the music of contemporary Japanese composers, including the premiere of Delyth Field's Digital Lullaby for harp and piano, curated together with Malaysian harpist Ian Lim as Liminal Duo. In celebration of Japanese composer Jō Kondō's 75th birthday, she has performed the chamber piece Standing for piano, flute, and Marimba.

She has performed in the United Kingdom, Spain and Malaysia in recent years, and

enjoys curating thought-provoking solo programmes. Her determination to share new music has led her to several collaborations and premiering pieces including Metamorphosis for 4 pianos by John Griffith II, and Stratioses by Chai Nien Chin.

At the RCM Keyboard Festival, Sophia has performed the compositions of Messiaen and Ligeti in the 2021 edition: 'Old, New, Borrowed and Blue'. She has also performed the music of Scriabin in the 'Spirit of Scriabin' edition in 2022, and in 2023 performed Rachmaninoff's 2 pieces for 6 hands. As part of the 'Music & Ideas' series at the RCM, Sophia performed the original music of Paul Robinson titled Maison Satie for 6 hands which was presented along with a projection of silent films, connecting both art mediums.

Sophia performed both solo and chamber music at venues including St James's Piccadilly, St George's Hanover Square, St Mary le Strand, St James's Sussex Gardens, Austrian Cultural Forum, St Mary Abbots Church, St Michael's Highgate, St Michael's Sittingbourne, and at the Royal College of Music. Most recently, she was appointed Ambassador of the Benedetti Foundation in 2024.

Programme Order

Claude Debussy

Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir

Leopold Godowsky

Java Suite

- VI. The Bromo Volcano and Sand Sea at Daybreak
- VII. Three Dances
- VIII. The Gardens of Buitenzorg
- XII. A Court Pageant at Solo

Interval

Robert Schumann

Davidsbündlertänze Op.6

- I. Lebhaft
- II. Innig
- III. Mit humor
- IV. Ungeduldig
- V. Einfach
- VI. Sehr rasch
- VII. Nicht schnell
- VIII. Frisch
- IX. Lebhaft
- X. Balladenmässig, sehr rasch
- XI. Einfach
- XII. Mit humor
- XIII. Wild und lustig
- XIV. Zart und singend
- XV. Frisch
- XVI. Mit gutem Humor
- XVII. Wie aus der Ferne
- XVIII. Nicht schnell

Les sons et le parfum tournent dans l'air du soir...

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Painting: Baudelaire - Harmonie du soir , by Scott Horts

We begin the programme this afternoon with Debussy's fourth prélude *Les sons et le parfum tournent dans l'air du soir...* (The sounds and fragrances swirl through the evening air...), from *Préludes*, Book 1, completed in 1910.

The title and inspiration of the piece is taken from the poem *Harmonie du soir* (Harmonies of the evening) by the French poet, Charles Baudelaire.

The poem is a pantoum (Malay pantun), meaning the second and fourth lines of each stanza become the first and third lines of the next, and Debussy preserved that pattern musically. In this prelude, he uses 4ths, 5ths, and tritones weaved throughout to convey a sense of memory and recollection similar to the effect conveyed by the formal structure of a pantoum.

Though a short prelude, the harmonies in this gentle, waltz-like prelude shift rather quickly. Its gentle and ambiguous melodies float as effortlessly as the sounds and fragrances depicted in the poem. Even the harmonies seem tinged with a dusky hue,

conjuring a musical image of the twilight ambiance - a fitting prelude to the next piece in the programme: *The Bromo Volcano and the Sandsea at Daybreak*.

From *Harmonie du Soir*:

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;

Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;

Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

English translation:

The season is at hand when swaying on its stem

Every flower exhales perfume like a censer;

Sounds and perfumes turn in the evening air;

Melancholy waltz and languid vertigo!

Translated by William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

Java Suite

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938)



Like Debussy, Godowsky was also clearly inspired by the music of the Javanese Gamelan. *The Java Suite* was composed between 1924 and 1925. The whole work consists of 12 movements, each descriptive of the scenes during his visit to Java. You will hear the extensive use of the pentatonic harmonies throughout the selected movements today.

The Bromo Volcano and Sandsea at Daybreak is bombastic, and the sunrise enhances the terrifying hugeness and transcendental grandeur at the Bromo crater at dawn. This movement perfectly captures the rewarding triumph of completing a climb to view and feel the majesty of the mountains. As Godowsky describes: "But the bright sun, shedding its glorious light and: dispelling all fear and gloom, changed the feeling of a crushing futility into an ecstatic triumphal ode."

Of the *Three Dances*, Godowsky described it as such: "It is doubtful if there is a people in any part of the world whose innermost feelings are so wholly revealed in their dances as are the Javanese.

...The first of the Three Dances expresses the languor and melancholy of the Far

East; the second, the grace and charm of the Oriental dancers; the third, their poetry and tenderness, translated into an Occidental idiom."

In the intense chromaticism of *The Gardens of Buitenzorg* (Bogor, Indonesia today), Godowsky expresses intriguing fragrances of the gardens by using subtle harmonic shifts. "Why do certain scents produce unutterable regrets, insatiable longings, indefinable desires?"

This reminded myself of the times when I missed Sabah terribly during my visits to the Kew Gardens in London, as certain scents at the Palm House in the gardens reminded me of home.

We finally come to the final movement of the suite, *A Court Pageant at Solo*. "The pomp, bombast and gorgeousness of a royal procession on a festive occasion or court function in either of the two native capitals make a dazzling and grotesque spectacle. Strongly emphasised in the middle section of this closing composition, is that strain of sadness ever present in the music of the Orient. The suite finishes on an intensified version of the barbaric march."

Davidsbündlertänze Op.6

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

The Davidsbündler, translated as the ‘League of David’, was inspired by literary societies during Schumann’s time. It refers to an imaginary society of artistic characters created by Schumann in his writings. Their aim is to fight against the Philistines (of the arts), that is, those who oppose art and innovation in the arts.

The 18 dances are altogether tender, whimsical, eccentric, fiery, dramatic, intimate, reflective, agitative, dreamy, celebrative, and humorous - it is truly a vast musical tapestry. Schumann’s wife Clara was practically his sole motivation for writing this work.

The pieces are not true dances, but characteristic pieces, musical dialogues about contemporary music between Schumann’s characters. Different facets of Schumann’s personalities are in the Davidsbündler - mainly Eusebius and Florestan. The former is poetic and gentle, the latter exuberant. Each piece is ascribed to either one or both of them. You will hear the two contrasting fictional characters in the dances as they evoke a range of moods and narratives.

The finale is sweet and delicate, and we finish with what we started with in the programme, a waltz-like melancholy fills us with a deep feeling of bittersweetness and nostalgia.



Robert Schumann with Clara Schumann.
(Photo: Britannica)