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Brass-string pairing



Chamber ensemble T'ang Quartet will put on a show with Boston Brass from the US in an unusual concert

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Brass music and string music may sound like chalk and cheese, but they will be coming together in an unusual concert next Saturday.

Presented by American brass quintet Boston Brass and home-grown chamber ensemble T'ang Quartet, the concert will feature music inspired by English playwright William Shakespeare's Romeo And Juliet - from Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev's ballet of the same name to the more contemporary The Juliet Letters by British singer-songwriter Elvis Costello.

The different pieces have been specially arranged for brass and strings.

While there is a worry that the honky brass music might completely drown out the more delicate string sounds, T'ang Quartet cellist Leslie Tan says: "It is a bit of a strange collaboration. But we will be mic-ed up. It'll be tricky, but not impossible."

He adds: "Mic-ing up means more danger, because if there's a bad sound, it will be amplified, but hopefully we won't have to worry about that."

This is also a way for both groups to reach out to a wider audience, because string music fans may not ordinarily attend a concert by a brass quintet, and vice versa.

"I think audiences should give this



Boston Brass (top) and T'ang Quartet (above), comprising (from left) Lionel Tan, Ng Yu-ying, Leslie Tan and Ang Chek Meng, hope to reach out to a wider audience with their concert. PHOTOS: CHIP LITHERLAND, ALOYSIUS LIM

strange combination a chance," Tan adds with a laugh.

Boston Brass trombonist and euphoniumist Lance LaDuke says: "It's not going to be a competition between the strings and the brass. The arrangements highlight the strength of both the groups."

Tan says: "We all have juicy bits to play and we will not sound like a reduced orchestra."

The quartet got to know their American friends when the Boston Brass were at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Of Music for

a residency in 2008.

LaDuke, 43, says: "This collaboration came out of friendship. We socialised a lot with the guys from T'ang Quartet and we brainstormed what we could do together. We were eager to work with them."

A fan of string music himself, he adds: "I can't speak for the rest, but I've liked American string quartet Kronos for a long time."

"What's interesting about both Kronos and T'ang Quartet is that, although they are in a medium that is so entrenched in history, they explore new things and end up with a rich combination of sounds."

And this is the direction that the T'ang Quartet hope to take.

Tan says: "We've been playing at concerts for so many years, so we need to think of what else is new. We think of new concepts to reach out to younger music enthusiasts."

"This is a test for us, we hope that we will be able to fill the hall," he adds.

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When: Jan 15, 7.30pm
Admission: \$20 to \$60 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)
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