



# 30



## T'ang Quartet Kickstarts Its 30th Anniversary Celebration With A Brand New Programme



Supported by **a.r.t.s.fund**







From left-right: Wang Zihao, Ang Chek Meng, Ng Yu-Ying, Han Oh

**March 28 2022:** One of the best known and most accomplished string quartets in Southeast Asia, Singapore's T'ang Quartet is marking its third decade with the first concert this year on April 22 at Victoria Concert Hall. Classical music enthusiasts and fans of the Quartet have much to look forward to.

The award-winning ensemble – also Quartet-in-Residence at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music – will begin the celebration with a programme that goes back to their humble beginnings – their intent distilled in their selection of a quartet work by Haydn, an Austrian composer of the classical era known for his part in the development of chamber music.

T'ang Quartet will perform two pieces – Haydn String Quartet Op.76 No.2 "Fifths", and Borodin String Quartet No.2 in D Major (programme notes, page 6). Tickets are now on sale. *Humble Beginnings* is part of the Quartet's new anniversary programme – with up to four concerts as well as a commemorative coffee-table book, *T'ang At 30*.

Known for their bold and adventurous

interpretations of the more modern works in the classical repertoire, now with their maturity and experience, they will endeavour to tackle the major works of the great masters such as Haydn, Mozart, Brahms and Beethoven while keeping their edge in performing contemporary works and new ones by living composers.

### 30 Years & Beyond

Founding member Ng Yu-Ying says: "It is time for us to go back to the music that inspired us to become musicians, and these are the champions of chamber music that made us want to become a professional quartet 30 years ago."

The Quartet, adds founding member Ang Chek Meng, will also to extend their reach of classical music, even beyond the concert hall and also to collaborate with artists of different genres and disciplines, to reach out to new audiences.

For the past 30 years, the group's musical dexterity has delighted audiences locally and globally. What started out in 1992 as a unanimous purpose to break new ground in the sharing of music to a larger audience has grown tremendously. T'ang Quartet's creative output is an artful blend of East and West, old and new,

seamlessly, reinterpreting classical work for contemporary fans while appealing to traditional audiences.

### New Members

The upcoming outing will formally introduce T'ang's new members – Han Oh and Wang Zihao (musicians' bios, Page 4). The former has been with the Quartet for two years while the latter joined less than a year ago.

Wang says: "It is a huge honour for me to be part of the T'ang Quartet, which I held great admiration for when I was a student at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, and to play with musicians of such a high calibre."

And the "new" Quartet's unmistakable charisma and connection as one, mirrors their signature sound: soul-stirring, sharp and modern.

### Humble Beginnings

Date: April 22, Friday  
Venue: Victoria Concert Hall  
Time: 7.30pm – 8.30pm  
Tickets: \$40 & \$28 (students, NSF, seniors)  
Buy @ <https://beginnings.peatix.com>



From left-right: Wang Zihao, Ng Yu-Ying, Ang Chek Meng, Han Oh

## The Road To T'ang

The Quartet almost ceased to exist when the two current founding members, Ng Yu-Ying and Ang Chek Meng, were involved in an accident when they were studying in Rice University, Texas, in 1997-1998. Yu-Ying, who was driving on a narrow road, lost control of their car and it went off the road and rolled down the slope. Miraculously, the two violinists escaped with minor injuries.

The Quartet have always wanted to remain a Singapore ensemble. In 1998, they were offered a position in the United States but turned it down even though Chek Meng, whose wife was expecting at that time, was prepared to leave the Quartet. The other members decided to stick with him.

## A Fateful Turn

Han Oh became a violist after he auditioned unsuccessfully for the Singapore Youth Orchestra as a violinist after taking lessons sporadically over a period of two years. He was later offered a position as a violist and it came with a tuition scheme under a musician from the

Singapore Symphony Orchestra, and he studied for four years under T'ang Quartet's (retired) founding member Lionel Tan.



## Breaking The Stereotype

The T'ang Quartet posed topless in a shoot for a local magazine (8Days) in 1993 shortly after their debut the previous year. It was, together with the interview, an effort to dispel the "fuddy-duddy" image of the classical musician, but the image of the cool rockstar/boyband stuck with the Quartet for a long time after that.

## Fun Facts

- The name T'ang is an amalgamation of the surnames – Tan, Ang and Ng – of the founding members of the Quartet. It was also chosen because the T'ang Dynasty (618-907 AD) is regarded by historians as the Golden Age of Chinese culture and civilisation.
- Zihao was a year old when the T'ang Quartet exploded onto the Singapore classical music scene. The cellist from China does not know why his mother chose to start him on cello lessons when he was 4 years old, but when the very obedient child was 14, he made a decision to remain one.

## For Interviews & Concert Reviews, contact:

Cara Van Miriah  
cara@infected.studio, +65.9066.3440

Journalists who would like to review the concert, do RSVP by April 20.

Attending & reporting media are also invited to the After-Concert Reception on the same evening (8.35pm – 9pm) hosted by T'ang Quartet. Light refreshments will be served.



### New Member

#### Wang Zihao, Cello

Zihao started his career as a cellist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. He joined the T'ang Quartet in 2021. In 2011, he entered the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music to study with world renowned cellist Qin Li-Wei, winning the first prize of the concerto competition. With many concerts and solo performances in Europe, Singapore and China, Zihao has performed in concert halls such as Philharmonie Berlin, Frauenkirche Dresden and Esplanade.

Zihao learned to play the cello at four with Professor Liu Zhengtan, and later with Professor Chen Yuan and Professor Na Mula at the middle school of the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing. During his time at the Central Conservatory, Zihao was the Principal Cellist of the China's Youth Symphony Orchestra.



### Founding Member

#### Ang Chek Meng, Second Violin

Chek has performed with the Quartet at major venues in Asia and beyond, including the Aspen Music Festival, Tanglewood Festival, Music Mountain Chamber Series, Melbourne Festival and New Zealand Arts Festival.

Winner of the Singapore National Music Competition (1985, 1987), he received a Singapore Symphony Orchestra Scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He trained under Jean Harvey, Erich Gruenberg and members of the Amadeus Quartet. Graduating with honours, Chek was awarded the Countess of Munster Trust Scholarship. Chek joined the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 1991.



### New Member

#### Han Oh, Viola

A highly sought-after musician in the local and international theater music arena, Han has performed musical theatre productions such as "December Rains", "Into the Woods", "Spring Awakening" and "La Cage aux Folles".

An accomplished concert artiste, chamber musician and conductor, he also established himself as one of the leading pedagogues for violin and viola performance in Singapore. He has groomed students who have been accepted into top music schools around the world such as Indiana University, Boston University and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.



### Founding Member

#### Ng Yu-Ying, First Violin

He embarked on his professional career as a violinist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra after graduating from the Royal Academy of Music (UK) with first-class honours. During his undergraduate days, he studied with Clarence Myerscough and Erich Gruenberg.

Yu-Ying was awarded the Alex Templeton Prize, Roth Prize and Dominion Fellowship. Aside from chamber music performances, his collaborations with violist Jiri Heger have brought him to the Czech Republic, where he performed in concerts and live television programmes.



[Click to download press assets](#)

30  
YEARS  
TANG QUARTET

# A Spectacular Evening With Tang

Humble Beginnings  
Apr 22 2022, Friday  
Victoria Concert Hall



*Haydn String Quartet Op.76 No.2 "Fifths"*  
*Borodin String Quartet No.2 in D Major*

Supported by



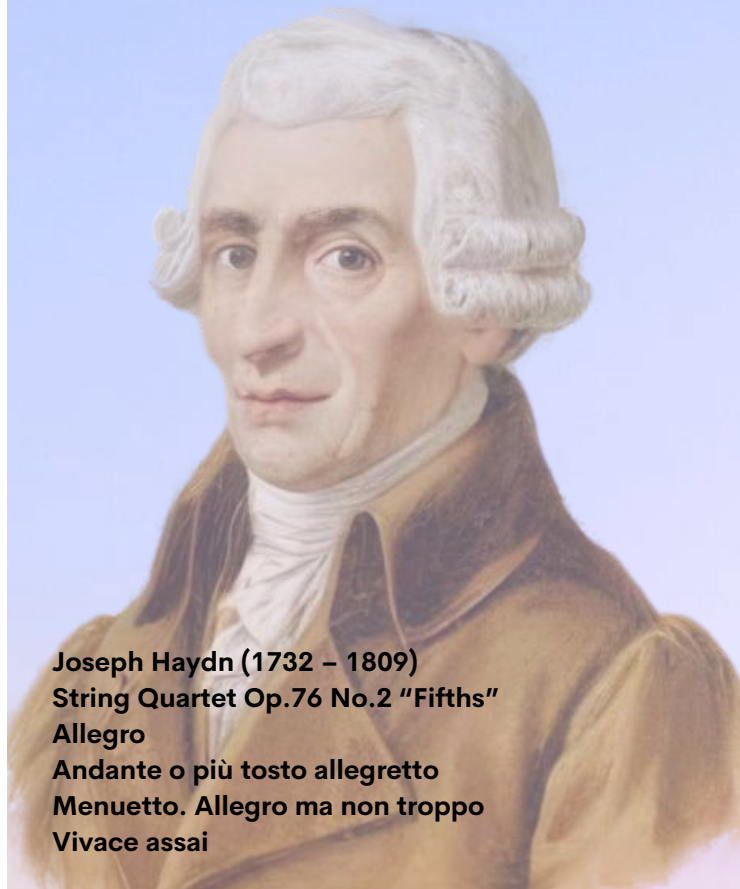
Tickets @ \$40 & \$28 on <https://beginnings.peatix.com>

Supported by **a.r.t.s.fund**





## Programme Notes

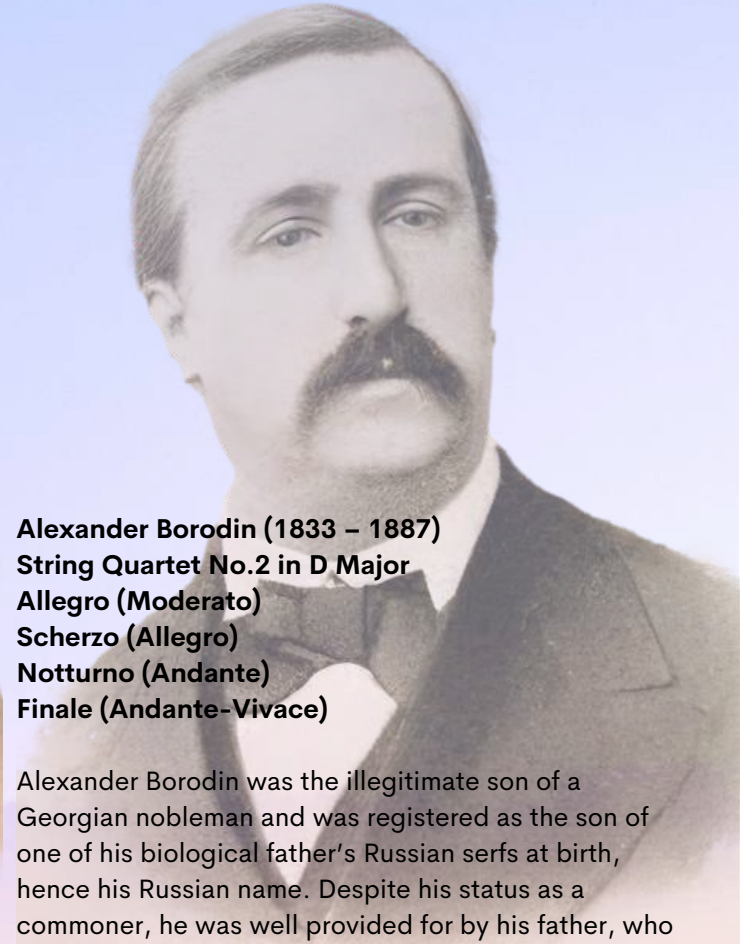


**Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)**  
**String Quartet Op.76 No.2 "Fifths"**  
**Allegro**  
**Andante o più tosto allegretto**  
**Menuetto. Allegro ma non troppo**  
**Vivace assai**

Haydn's body of works includes a massive output of string quartets – 68 in total, written over five decades – and his Opus 76 is the last of these. These six quartets were written between 1796 and 1787, probably for a handsome commission when Haydn was already 65, world-famous from the acclaim he received during his London tours, financially secure from the many commissions he received and semi-retired from service to his patrons, the Esterhazy family.

They were ambitious, technically-demanding pieces composed for very proficient musicians for public performances and would become the inspiration for future composers of string quartets.

Haydn was judicious in his use of minor keys in the composition of his quartets – only about one in six of his quartets are written in a minor key, and the No 2 of this opus, in D minor, is one of them. It is nicknamed "Fifths" (or Quinten) on account of a four-note motif made up of two pairs of falling fifths in the first movement.



**Alexander Borodin (1833 – 1887)**  
**String Quartet No.2 in D Major**  
**Allegro (Moderato)**  
**Scherzo (Allegro)**  
**Notturmo (Andante)**  
**Finale (Andante-Vivace)**

Alexander Borodin was the illegitimate son of a Georgian nobleman and was registered as the son of one of his biological father's Russian serfs at birth, hence his Russian name. Despite his status as a commoner, he was well provided for by his father, who gave him a very big house and private tuition in various subjects. Though professionally a chemist and physician, music was a major vocation of his. In 1862, he started taking lessons in composition from Mily Balakirev and a year after, married Ekaterina Protopopov, a pianist.

The String Quartet No 2 in D Major was dedicated to his wife. It was written when Borodin was staying in the estate of a friend, the composer and diplomat Nikolai Lodyzhensky, during the summer of 1881. While Borodin was known to take years to finish his major compositions because of his commitments as a chemist, he completed this work in a relatively short period, possibly also because it was an anniversary gift to Ekaterina, whom he had met and got engaged to 20 years before.

Borodin's instrument was the cello, which he played with great interest as a chamber musician, and it carries the the first theme of the first movement and introduces the well-loved melody of the Notturmo. The work demonstrates Borodin's gift for contrapuntal writing, especially in the last movement with its familiar question-answer motifs.