

Celebrating the milestones of two icons in one show

2030

YST QUARTET-IN-RESIDENCE: T'ANG QUARTET

March 3, 2023 • 7:30pm
Conservatory Concert Hall
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music
Tickets at \$10 on [yst/eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)

GIVE AND TAKE (BACK AND FORTH) PROGRAMME

Chen Zhangyi

Twin Cinema for String Nonet

Featuring:

Guennadi Mouzyka, double bass
Edgar Javier Lucena Rodriguez, violin
Hoi Khai-Weing, violin
Lee Wei-Fan, viola
Sim Yein, cello

Maurice Ravel

String Quartet in F

Chen Zhangyi

Give and Take (Back and Forth)
for T'ang Quartet



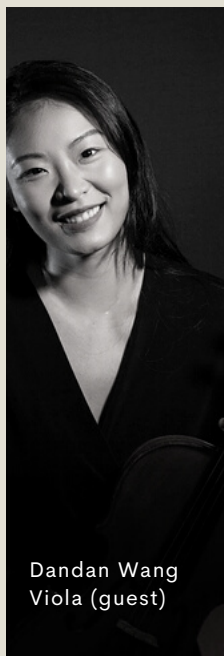
Ng Yu-Ying
1st violin



Ang Chek Meng
2nd violin



Jamshid S.
Cello (guest)



Dandan Wang
Viola (guest)



Conservatory Concert Hall at
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music

Singapore's preeminent string quartet The T'ang Quartet is taking to the stage at the concert hall at the Yong Siew Toh (YST) Conservatory of Music on March 3. The show, which is also part of YST's 20th Anniversary 2022/2023 Season, is a special one for the ensemble – also YST's Quartet-In-Residence.

The finale of the Tang Quartet's 30th anniversary programme, this concert programme comprises three sterling works from two outstanding composers – French composer, pianist and conductor Maurice Revel, and Singaporean composer Chen Zhangyi, who is also YST's assistant professor, where he currently teaches analysis and composition. He is also a conductor, violinist and violist.

Commissioned Work

The programme will feature the commissioned piece, *Give and Take (Back and Forth)*, composed by Chen. Ng Yu-Ying, T'ang Quartet's founding member, says: "We have known Zhangyi for a long time, and have always admired him for his talent as a musician and composer. This will be a significant and meaningful collaboration for all of us."

About T'ang Quartet

Constant innovation and steady reinvention is the name of the game for the T'ang Quartet. For 30 years, the group's musical dexterity has surprised and delighted audiences locally and globally. Based in Singapore, T'ang Quartet is one of the best known and most accomplished string quartets in Asia.

The ensemble has collaborated and performed with contemporaries such as John Chen, Fringin Collins, Noriko Ogawa, and Tedd Joselson. They have performed in major venues around the world – Wigmore Hall (London), Berliner Philharmonie (Berlin) and Seiji Ozawa Hall (Boston) – and in major festivals – Tanglewood Festival, Melbourne Festival, Edinburgh Festival and City of London Festival.

In 2022, the quartet celebrated three decades in music with three concerts, and they are gearing up for another exciting year in 2023. T'ang Quartet is a registered charity under the Charities Act in Singapore.

Guest Cellist // Jamshid Saydikarimov

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra cellist was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. He started learning cello at the age of seven with Madina Galiulina. In 2014, Jamshid won First Prize in the Knushevitsky International Cello Competition (Russia, Saratov). He graduated with distinction from Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, where he studied under Ng Pei-Sian. Jamshid has performed in Uzbekistan, Russia, Ukraine, Austria, Switzerland, Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, France, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. He performs on a 2020 Paolo Vettori cello, Firenze.

Guest Violist // Dandan Wang

Dandan Wang started violin studies at the age of six. When she was 16, she switched to viola studies with Prof Xi-Di Shen. In 2010, Dandan started her undergraduate studies in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music with scholarship, where she was a student of Prof Nian Liu. She performed in the Chamber Music Festival hosted by Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 2010. In 2015, she was invited by Oscar and Grammy-awarded Chinese Composer Tan Dun to perform his chamber music pieces in Shanghai and Beijing.

In 2015, Dandan began her study in San Francisco Conservatory of Music as a graduate student, and in 2016, she was admitted to the Pacific Music Festival, one of the most famous festivals in the world. She served as the Principal Viola, performing with maestro Valery Gergiev, violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and with musicians from the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Metropolitan Opera, National Symphony and San Francisco Symphony.

After graduating from San Francisco Conservatory, Dandan was a guest violist of the San Francisco Symphony and at the same time, a fellow musician of San Jose Opera. Dandan has served as a violist tutti in the Singapore Symphony Orchestra since February 2018 and as a coach in the Singapore National Youth Orchestra.



Composer Chen Zhangyi

The music of Chen Zhangyi has been described as "music from a voice of the future" by BBC Radio 3 and "a breath of fresh air on our musical landscape" by The Straits Times. Nature is an important source of inspiration in his instrumental and orchestral works, such as *Vanda*, *Rain Tree* and *Of An Ethereal Symphony*.

In his dramatic works such as the chamber opera cycle *A Singapore Trilogy*, he often explores the musical representation of Singaporean culture. Chen teaches Analysis and Composition at Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

Twin Cinema for String Nonet

Commissioned by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), *Twin Cinema* was written for the Stradivari Quartet and musicians of the SSO. The concept of the work is based on the Singaporean poetic form of *Twin Cinema*, where two separate columns of poetry may be read separately, or across, as a single poem.

Chen has taken inspiration from Dr Sara Florian's poem 'The Lost Seasons'. A poem that weaves together the *Twin Cinema* form with the *pantun*, while depicting two concurrent coming-of-age stories: a Venetian countryside boy contrasted with a Singaporean kampung boy. Florian conjures the passage of time, effects of the changing climate, and the counterpoint between the rustic and the urban, navigating between the East and the West.

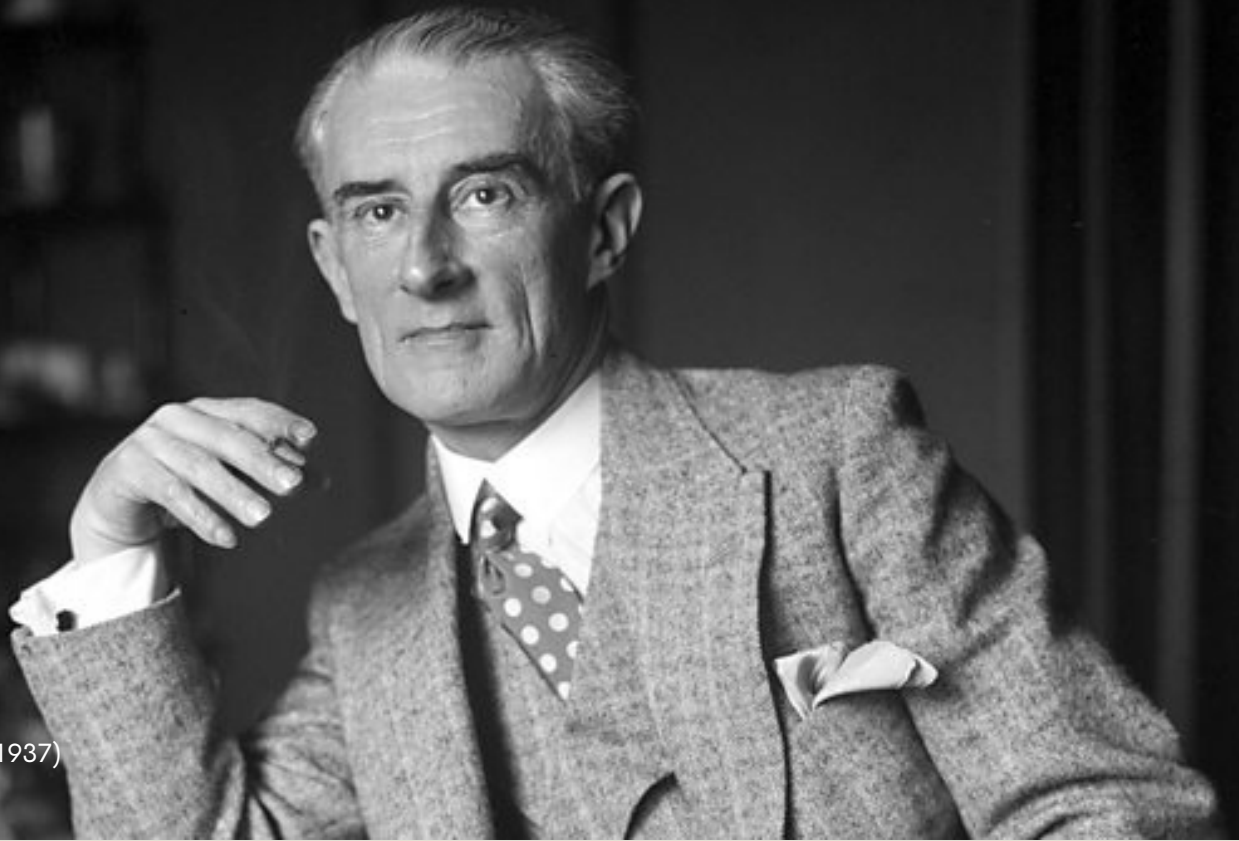
Musically, Chen has taken a slightly cinematic and eclectic approach, exploring and maintaining two strands of narratives between the two quartets. The pair of quartets are placed in a 'stereo' antiphony, and their musical strands coexist in sometimes complementary, and at times surreal juxtapositions of moods and characters in this imaginary duet of 'cinematic' scores. Throughout, the contrabass acts as the central pillar that support the narratives on both sides.

Give and Take (Back and Forth) for String Quartet

The piece is commissioned by the T'ang Quartet's in celebration for their 30th anniversary as an ensemble. Chen says: "As with any relationship (or marriage), playing together in a string quartet requires the tight-knit rapport to play in perfect harmony and synchrony, moving and breathing as one musical body. Naturally, the delicate balance of four personalities involves some sort of 'give and take'."

He adds: "I am very honoured to be able to create a work for the T'ang Quartet on this momentous occasion, where their milestone of three decades coincides with the two decades of YST Conservatory's. Being an alumnus and a faculty member at YST, it is indeed a good time to reflect upon the past and look forward to the future, and to borrow the institution's current theme of 'Looking Back, Moving Forward'."

PROGRAMME



Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
String Quartet in F

- I. Allegro moderato – très doux**
- II. Assez vif – très rythmé**
- III. Très lent**
- IV. Vif et agité**

Ravel's String Quartet in F is modelled after a piece written a decade earlier by Debussy: first movement in sonata form, barbed interjections between plucked and bowed strings in the Scherzo, a moving and lyrical elegy following this before ending with a rhythmically quirky finale. The movements are connected by repetitive head motifs in the style of Cesar Franck – ironically something which the two younger composers had been known to consciously avoid.

Quartet writing had become the epitome of abstract composition since the time of Mozart, and both Debussy and Ravel appeared to desire their works to be seen within that convention, not just through the use of traditional forms but also in their titling. Ravel's statement of an overarching tonality – Quartet in F – is as misleading as Debussy's assigning of an opus number (10) to his work without such an index in his previous nine.

Debussy is believed to have listened to Ravel's Quartet before it premiered in 1904 and given his approval of the work. However, the similarities between the two works triggered the supporters of either composer, leading to an unfortunate rift between the two.

"It's probably best...", said Ravel reflected, "for us to be on frigid terms for illogical reasons."

While time never healed the rift between the two French composers, it has muted the similarities to reveal contrasts underneath. Ravel's scoring for the strings is obviously more transparent even though it had an orchestral range of colour. The Basque character which Ravel got from his mother, always so evident as a badge of identity in his music, reveals itself in the Scherzo's guitar-like strumming.

Ravel himself would later admit to flaws in his quartet's form, but one should probably be sceptical of this as one might think of Brahms' self-deprecating assessment of his own work. After all, all three men placed Mozart closest to God, with Ravel's piece closer to Mozartian harmony of expression than the quartets of either Debussy or Fauré – particularly in the first and third movements, where the audience is drawn in by a reserved, confident and mysterious attraction.

Source: Hi-Fi News