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#MFMF121: T'ang Quartet Compiles The Best Of Baroque, Classical, Romantic And 20th Century Music

By Charmaine Tan

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Instead of featuring just the Men's Folio team's weekly playlists (you can catch up here), however, we've opened up the column to friends, industry mates, and people who we think have the right groove.

T'ang Quartet is founded by Ang Chek Meng, Ng Yu-Ying, Leslie Tan and Lionel Tan in 1992, and is the first professional string quartet to be formed in Singapore. Acclaimed for their impeccable precision and balance, the quartet's musical repertoire is a skilful and contemporary blend of both Eastern and Western influences, their presence and influence as one of Asia's most accomplished and critically-acclaimed string quartets unrivalled and long-lasting for classical music enthusiasts all over the world.

On March 3, T'ang Quartet will perform the last major concert of their 30th anniversary season at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, where they have been Quartet-In-Residence since 2003. The exquisite programme will comprise three sterling works from French composer, pianist and conductor Maurice Revel, and Singaporean wunderkind composer Chen Zhangyi.

Ahead of the show, we invite two founding members of the string quartet, first violinist Ng Yu-Ying and second violinist Ang Chek Meng, to share their favourite works from the world's extensive repertoire of classical music. Expect to hear many staple string pieces for solo or other idioms, as well as other evocative works for piano, voice and more by composers like Mahler, Prokofiev, Bach, Bizet and Beethoven; all expertly performed by prodigious maestros of music.

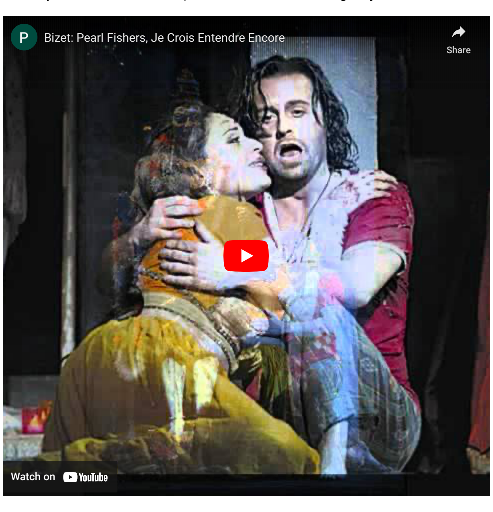
Ng Yu-Ying, 1st violin

Founding member, T'ang Quartet

Mahler Symphony No.5, 4th Movement Adagietto

The piece represents love and it's dedicated to his wife Alma. It's filled with emotion, it's poetic and passionate. The work was made famous in the 1971 historic feature film, Death in Venice, directed by Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti."

Bizet's opera — The Pearl Fishers "Je Crois Entendre Encore" (originally for tenor)

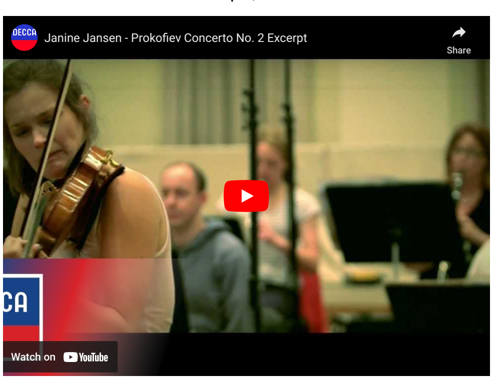


Bizet wrote some of the most beautiful arias of the operatic canon and this piece is one of them. The opera, The Pearl Fishers, is a story about friendship, love and betrayal and this song has so much feeling, so much sadness in it, as one might expect of an opera with those themes.

Beethoven String Quartet Op.132 in A minor, 3rd Movement

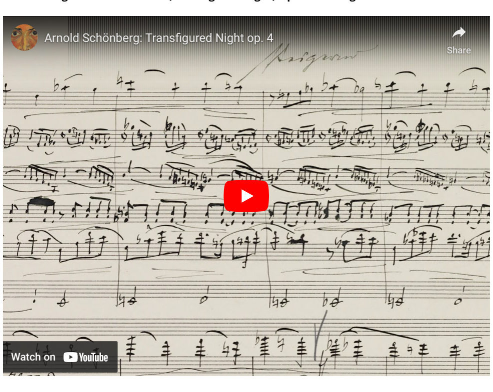
This movement bears the subtitle, "Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart." Which means "Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity from a convalescent in the Lydian mode". It is Beethoven's own musical offering after recovering from illness and for me, it represents my own expression of gratitude for a return to health.

Prokofiev 2nd Violin Concerto in G minor Op.63, Movement 2



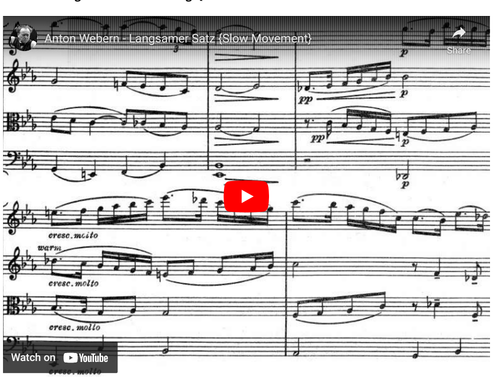
The piece is unusual in that it is a more conventional work by Prokofiev, who may be better known for his progressive and very modern compositions. The second movement, particularly this rendition by Janine Jansen, captures the poise and beauty of the violin in the gorgeous melody that runs through its entirety.

Schoenberg "Verklarte Nacht" (Transfigured Night) Op.4 for String Sextet



Arnold Schoenberg composed this work in 1899 when he was only 25 years-old. It is a masterpiece that is his best known and most accessible music that is dense and lush.

Webern – Langsamer Satz for String Quartet

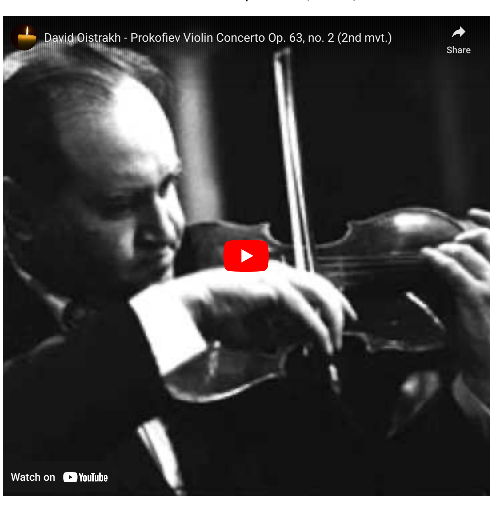


This work was said to be Inspired by a hiking holiday in the mountains outside of Vienna that Anton Webern took with his fiancée. The Langsamer Satz is a highly-charged work that speaks of a wide ranging emotion.

Ang Chek Meng, 2nd violin

Founding member, T'ang Quartet

David Oistrakh — Prokofiev Violin Concerto Op. 63, No. 2 (2nd mvt)

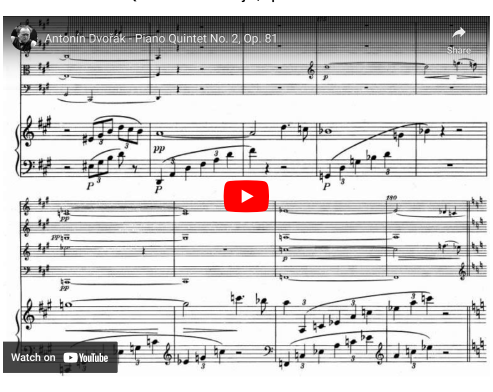


Oistrakh's rendition of this very lyrical movement is handled with clarity, precision and brightness. The soaring melodies, haunting harmonies and grotesque moments invoke images of Beauty and the Beast.

Franz Schubert String Quintet in C Major, D. 956

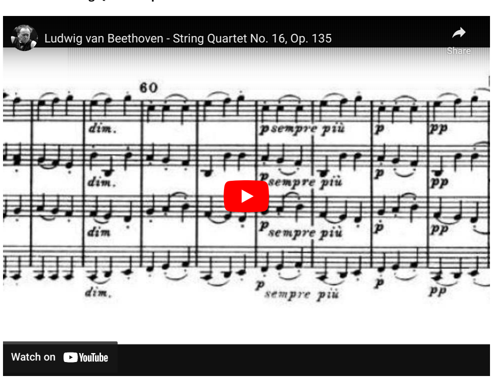
This is Schubert's last work, completed just two months before he died. It is also his only string quintet despite having written so much chamber music for strings. And instead of having two violas as most string quintets do, Schubert employs two cellos in this work. Not only is this piece highly regarded as one of Schubert's best, it is also considered by many to be among the best chamber music works.

Antonin Dvořák's Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 81



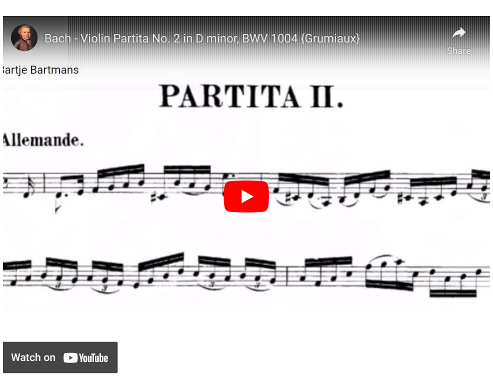
Written in 1887, this is a central work of Romantic-era chamber music. The opening cello melody justifies paying for that concert ticket!

Beethoven String Quartet Op. 135



This piece is the last major work written by Beethoven and was first performed a year after the composer's passing. Beethoven wrote in the manuscript, "Muß es sein?" (Must it be?) beneath the opening slow chords of the last movement, to which he replies "Es muß sein!" (It must be!), in the faster main theme. Perhaps this is an expression of the mental anguish of the composer in a movement aptly titled "Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß" (The Difficult Decision).

Bach Partita in D Minor for solo violin



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750) was a German composer and musician of the late Baroque period. This piece contains the celebrated Chaconne, an epic work which is probably the most powerful movement ever written for a solo string instrument. Originally written for the violin, there are transcriptions of it for various instruments, and even for orchestras of different sizes.

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6 Pathetique

This is one of the very great symphonies in the history of music. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) took a few months to compose the Sixth Symphony and it was premiered in St. Petersburg on October 28, 1893. He died a few days later. The work is somber and evokes strong emotions.

Purchase tickets for the Give and Take (Back and Forth) here. Once you're done with this story, click here to catch up with our February 2023 issue.

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