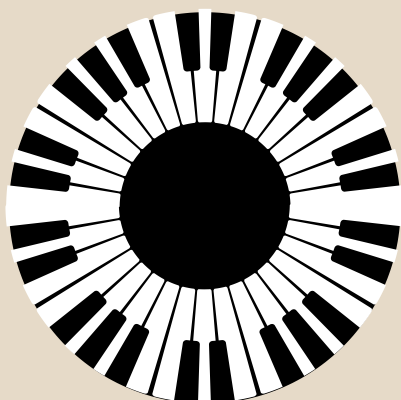




A Celebration of Women & Dance



**Elena Kats-Chernin
From Anna Magdalena's
Notebook**

**Caroline Shaw
Three Essays**

**Astor Piazzolla
Featuring & Arranged by
Albert Tiu for piano & string
quartet**

Dec 16 2023, VCH



THANK YOU!

As we end the year, we would like to thank you for being with us tonight on a journey that we began in 1992.

In our 31st year as the T'ang Quartet, we have had the pleasure of working with violist Wang Dandan and cellist Jamshid Saydikarimov in the first three concerts of the 2023/2024 season, and we hope that these two young, talented and accomplished musicians, who debuted with us at the last concert of the 2022/2023 season, will continue to perform with us for many seasons to come.

This year, we have been saddened by the passing of two people who have been very important to the T'ang Quartet: Jiri Heger and Michael Chu Shiu Keung.

Jiri was instrumental in the formation of the T'ang Quartet. He was a teacher and mentor to the founding members of the quartet and encouraged us to get together as an ensemble when we were then musicians of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

He also helped us in the recording of our first albums by arranging studio recording sessions with sound engineers who had the expertise and experience of working with

classical string ensembles in his native Prague, and was always around to provide encouragement and invaluable and insightful advice whenever we needed it.

Michael and his wife, Ng Yu-Sin, have contributed significantly to the T'ang Quartet, besides being present for all our performances right until his demise.

We will miss Jiri and Michael profoundly, and we will honour their memory by being true to the belief they had in us.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to our sponsors for this concert: Asia Music Bookstore, Mandeville Conservatory of Music, and of course, Ms Ng Yu-Sin.

We hope you will all enjoy tonight's concert and we'd like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

See you in 2024!

Ng Yu-Ying, Ang Chek Meng
Founding members of the T'ang Quartet

Featuring Albert Tiu on piano



Born in Cebu, Philippines, Albert Tiu has been called "an artist of uncommon abilities" by American Record Guide. His latest Centaur recording, "Grand Russian", pairing Tchaikovsky's Grand Sonata and Rachmaninov's 1st Sonata, was cited in ARG: "Even with some legendary competition in this repertoire, Tiu stands tall with his interpretations and technical accomplishment."

A previous disc, "The Classical Elements", featuring twenty pieces grouped under Earth, Air, Water and Fire, was rated 5 Stars in International Piano and praised by Fanfare for a "fascinating recital containing some stunning playing." His 2010 tribute to Chopin and Skryabin, "Nocturnal Fantasies", featuring pairs of similarly-titled works by both composers, was dubbed "one of the all-time great piano recordings" by Fanfare.

Currently a Professor of Piano at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore, he studied with Jerome Lowenthal at the Juilliard School, with Michael Lewin at Boston Conservatory, and with Nita Abrogar-Quinto and Nelly Castro in the Philippines. A recipient of Juilliard's William Petschek Award and a prizewinner of competitions in Calgary (Honens), Helsinki (Maj Lind) and Santander (Paloma O'Shea), he won the First Prize and two concerto prizes in the 1996 UNISA International Piano Competition in Pretoria, South Africa.

Known for his innovative programming he has presented thought-provoking thematic

recitals, like "Chopin: Before & Beyond" (works that influenced Chopin and works inspired by Chopin), and "Bee Flat" (the two Sonatas in B-flat by Beethoven).

He has performed with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Hamburg Symphony, Finnish Radio Symphony, Gstaad Festival Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic, Winnipeg Symphony, and Philippine Philharmonic.

In 2005, he gave the Singapore premiere of Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto with the Singapore Symphony under Tang Muhai.

Other recent recording projects include collaborations with violist Zhang Manchin in the Brahms Viola Sonatas, and with tenor Alan Bennett in Schubert's "Winterreise", both on Centaur; with violinist Kam Ning in "Road Movies", a Meridian disc featuring American composers; and with cellist Qin Li-Wei, in two discs on Decca of Beethoven and Rachmaninov.

His "Students" have distinguished themselves in competitions and festivals around the world, and have pursued further studies in North America and Europe.

Aside from teaching, he has adjudicated in international piano competitions in France, Denmark, New Zealand, Thailand and Indonesia.

He is addicted to Angry Birds, a constant source of humour in the family and in his studio, but somehow he still manages to practise some piano. When it is in season, his addiction spreads to ice hockey, in which he supports the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Photo/bio: YST website

ELENA KATS-CHERNIN (b 1957)



From Anna Magdalena's Notebook

1. Polonaise #1
2. Musette
3. Aria
4. Menuet #1
5. Polonaise #2
6. Menuet #2

Commissioned by the Australian String Quartet and first performed in 2006, this work by Uzbekistan-born Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin draws its inspiration from the Clavierbuchlein (notebook) which Johann Sebastian Bach presented to his wife of four years, Anna Magdalena, in 1725. The first entries were two of Bach's partitas, and over the years, pieces by his sons, students, and friends of the family found their way into it.

"I was interested in an unromantic, dry, crisp and light sound. Somehow the thought of going to Anna Magdalena Bach's Notebook seemed appealing to me," says Kats-Chernin.

She adds that she chose the pieces she liked best, and also those which would work in contrast with each other. "The way I worked with the material was to give the original piece a chance to sound recognisable, at the same time giving it an impetus to change direction."

What must've been on the mind of Kats-Chernin was the role of Anna Magdalena in the Bach manor, which must have been a centre of music in its own right in Leipzig at the time.

"Few things played a role here: Anna Magdalena, singer, wife, mother was a superwoman in the Bach household, taking care of J. S. Bach and many children, looking after students, guest musicians passing through and at the same time keeping up the high role that the music played in their lives."

CAROLINE SHAW (b 1982)



Three Essays

1. Nimrod
2. Echo
3. Ruby

This piece in three movements was written during a time when the Pulitzer-winning American composer was troubled by the unrest before and consequent of the 2016 US Presidential election, and is her expression of the role and power of language in the spread of information and ideas as well as misinformation and confusion.

The first movement, *Nimrod*, refers to the biblical character believed to have commissioned the building of the Tower of Babel. That Bible story has it that the people of the world at that time spoke in just one language and the tower was designed to reach heaven, but God responded to their pride by making them speak in different languages, making communication impossible, thus resulting in the abandonment of the Babel Tower project.

The piece starts gently but quickly becomes tense and fragmented, with passages mimicking speech and suggestions of communicating and miscommunicating, ending in a note that portends to disaster. The second movement, *Echo*, is a slow movement which references the concept of the echo chamber that is so often created by social media and the danger it poses.

The third movement, *Ruby*, refers to the computer language and also the plain yet striking beauty of the gemstone after which it was named and this section unifies the thoughts and music of the preceding movements, bringing the piece to a logical resolution.



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ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921 – 1992)



1. Fuga Y Misterio
2. Soledad
3. Concierto Para Quinteto
4. Oblivion
5. La Muerte Del Angel
6. Le Grand Tango

Arranged for piano and string quartet by Albert Tiu

Born to Italian immigrants in Argentina, Piazzolla's name is synonymous with the tango. He may not have invented it, but by adding elements of jazz and classical music to the genre, he created a new style called nuevo tango, and is regarded today as the foremost composer of the tango.

Fuga Y Misterio: Written as part of a tango operita called Maria de Buenos Aires. It is an instrumental part of the opera, and begins with a fugue in a highly-strung, tango rhythm, which the various instruments echo. This gives way to the Misterio, which is a flowing melody related to the main theme of Maria in the operita.

Soledad (Solitude): As befitting its title, this composition has a melody of profound depth and melancholy which evokes a feeling of introspection.

Concierto Para Quinteto: This piece premiered in 1971 and was written to showcase the Quinteto Nuevo Tango, Piazzolla's own band. It was originally scored for bandoneon, violin, electric guitar, piano, and double bass. The composition has three movements in the traditional fast-slow-fast format but played attacca – without pausing between movements. The piece demonstrates the maturity of Piazzolla as a composer and it remained in his repertoire until the end of his career.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921 – 1992)



Oblivion: Written in 1982 and initially scored for bandoneón, piano and bass, its popularity has seen it arranged for various instruments, including solo arrangements for the guitar and piano. The piece has been described as haunting and atmospheric, and was commissioned for the 1984 film, *Enrico IV (Henry IV)* by Marco Bellocchio, about a man – an actor in a period drama – who loses consciousness after a fall and wakes up thinking he is the character he is playing.

La Muerte Del Angel: When Piazzolla returned to Argentina in 1955 after a period of study in Paris, he experimented with various styles, particularly jazz, but his endeavours were met with scorn by the established musicians of classic tango. It was during this time that he composed *La Muerte Del Angel* (The Death of the Angel), which was music accompaniment to a theatrical production – the story of the play being that of an angel who comes to heal the broken spirits of the people in a Buenos Aires home, only to meet a tragic end in a knife fight.

Le Grand Tango: Originally written as a single-movement piece for cello and piano, this piece combines traditional tango rhythms and syncopation in the style of jazz. It was published in 1982 Paris – hence the French title. This work is a showcase of Piazzolla's nuevo tango.

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