



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

DMA Recital II

Matthew Ming Li, piano

Esther Hae-In Choi, flute
Takayo Noguchi, violin
Peter Pinteric, clarinet
Hee-Yeon Kim, cello
Gideon Gee-Bum Kim, conductor

June 20th, 2015, 7:30pm
Walter Hall

PROGRAMME

Improvisations on an English Folk Tune, for flute, clarinet, and piano trio

David Crumb
(1962 –)

Songs of the Heavens and Firmament, for piano trio

When I cry with my voice – Have mercy upon me, and answer me
Song of the heavens and firmament
Song of the ransomed of the Lord

Gideon Gee-Bum Kim
(1964 –)

INTERMISSION

Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps

Liturgie de cristal
Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps
Abîme des oiseaux
Intermède
Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus
Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes
Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps
Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

Olivier Messiaen
(1908 – 1992)

This recital is in partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance

Matthew Li joined the Toronto Messiaen Ensemble in 2013. In 2015, the ensemble was invited as ensemble-in-residence at Colorado College and was featured in *Open Stage* concert series in New York City. Matthew is a student of Marietta Orlov.

The Toronto Messiaen Ensemble presents:

The Sound of End Times

***Improvisations on an English Folk Tune* (2004)**

The melody that I use as the basis for this cycle of nine improvisations, known as *Scarborough Fair*, is from an anonymous English folk song that dates back to late medieval times. As a child, I first heard the tune in a popularized arrangement sung by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel (from the 1966 album *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme*). This simple yet melancholy Dorian melody exhibits an exquisitely balanced phrase structure that ultimately allows for a variety of potential harmonizations, many of which I explore throughout the composition.

Improvisations on an English Folk Tune was commissioned in 2003 by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University, and premiered by the Third Angle New Music Ensemble in January 2005.

~ David Crumb

***Songs of the Heavens and Firmament* (1992)**

The thought of darkness in mankind and the possibility to overcome the feeling of hopelessness derives from the brutality placed on innocent Koreans, especially Korean young women called comfort women during the Japanese imperialism over Korea. Song of the heavens and firmament was written in response to the inferiority that was felt during that time. The piece consists of three movements, each based on a Biblical scripture: Psalm 27:7, Psalm 19:1-4, and Isaiah 35:10.

I. When I cry with my voice – Have mercy upon me, and answer me

"Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!"

(Psalm 27:7)

The piece begins by expressing lamentation about injustice and the darkness of man; hence, humankind must look forward to the help provided by the Savior (Jehova) in order to free itself of such sorrow.

II. Song of the heavens and firmament

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor

are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

(Psalm 19:1-4)

The development of the second movement explains how man must listen to the voice of nature with respect to the Creator. Man is also required to recover purity and honesty, which can be acquired from nature.

III. Song of the ransomed of the Lord

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

(Isaiah 35:10)

The final resolution is that man's sorrow and self-esteem will eventually flee from the soul. Therefore, one is able to obtain joy and happiness. This piece is dedicated to those who suffered from cruelty during the Japanese imperialism as well as those who sacrificed their lives to fight against injustice.

~ Gideon Gee-Bum Kim

Song of the Heavens and Firmament was awarded Grand Prize in the 1993 Korean Broadcasting System Composition Competition and the 1994 Ye Eum Prize of Creation from the Ye Eum Culture Foundation. It was also performed at the 1997 ISCM World Music Days in Seoul by the Continuum of New York.

***Quator pour la Fin du Temps* (Quartet for the End of Time, 1941)**

"Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

(Revelation 10:1-3, 5-7)

I. Liturgie de cristal (Crystal liturgy)

Between three and four in the morning, the awakening of birds: a solo blackbird or nightingale improvises, surrounded by a shimmer of sound, by a halo of trills lost very high in the trees. Transpose this onto a religious plane and you have the harmonious silence of Heaven.

II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps (Vocalise for the angel that announces the end of time)

The first and third sections (very short) evoke the power of the mighty Angel, crowned with a rainbow and clothed by a cloud, who sets one foot upon the sea and one foot upon the earth. In the middle section – these are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. On the piano, gentle cascades of blue-orange chords, garlanding with their distant carillon the quasi-plainsong chanting of the violin and cello.

III. Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of the birds)

Clarinet solo. The abyss is Time, with its sorrows and its weariness. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and joyful songs!

IV. Intermède

A scherzo of more superficial character than the other movements, but linked to them nonetheless by melodic reminiscences.

V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus (Praise the Eternity of Jesus)

Jesus is here considered as the Word. A long phrase for the cello, infinitely slow, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of this powerful and gentle Word, “which the years can never efface”. Majestically, the melody unfolds in a kind of tender and supreme distance. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes (Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets)

Rhythmically the most characteristic piece of the set. The four instruments in unison are made to sound like gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the apocalypse followed by various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announcing the consummation of the mystery of God). The use of added values, augmented or diminished rhythms, and non-retrogradable rhythms. Music of stone, fearful granite sonorities; the irresistible movement of steel, enormous blocks of purple fury, of icy intoxication. Listen above all to the terrible fortissimo of the theme in augmentation and the changes in register of its different notes, towards the end of the piece.

VII. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps
(Tumult of rainbows, for the angel who announces the end of times)

Certain passages from the second movement return. The mighty Angel appears, and above all the rainbow which crowns him (the rainbow: a symbol of peace, wisdom and of all sounding and luminous vibrations). In my dreams, I hear recognized chords and melodies, I see known colours and forms; then, after this transitory stage, I pass beyond reality and submit in ecstasy to dizziness, a gyratory interlocking of superhuman sounds and colours. These swords of fire, these flows of blue-orange lava, these sudden stars; this is the tumult of rainbows!

VIII. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus (Praise the immortality of Jesus)

A long violin solo, acting as a pendant to the cello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second eulogy? It is addressed more specifically to the second aspect of Jesus – the man Jesus – to the Word made flesh, resurrected immortally to grant us life. It is all love. Its slow ascent towards the extreme high register is the ascent of man towards his God, of the Child of God towards his Father, of the deified Being towards Paradise.

~ Olivier Messiaen

When France surrounded to the invading Third Reich in 1940, many remaining French troops were taken as prisoners-of-war. Among them was the 31-year-old composer, Olivier Messiaen. Under these extraordinary circumstances and with the help of a sympathetic German officer, Messiaen was still able to compose and work with fellow musician inmates. A devout Catholic, Messiaen focused on realizing his faith and hope into music during the time of desperation and destruction. The *Quartet for the End of Time* was completed and premiered within the confines of Stalag VIII-A prisoner-of-war camp near Görlitz, Lower Silesia.

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me [...] and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"
(Matthew 28:18, 20b)



The Toronto Messiaen Ensemble (TME) is a Canadian chamber ensemble dedicated to the performance of classical and contemporary music. It was founded in 2011 by the composer Gideon Gee-Bum Kim, who is the ensemble's artistic director. The TME has built a reputation through its unique and spiritual musical programming and has recently been appointed as ensemble-in-residence in Colorado College and selected to perform at the Open Stage 2014-2015 hosted by the Korean Cultural Service in New York City. For upcoming events and biographies of our members, please visit our website at www.torontomessiaen.com.