

A man with dark hair, smiling, is sitting on a black harp stool. He is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, white trousers, and white sneakers. To his left is a large, ornate golden harp with intricate carvings and a floral design on its side. The background consists of dark brown vertical panels. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

LIGHTS

Master's Recital by Nigel Foo

19 Nov 2022, 11am
YST Concert Hall

Works by
Couperin,
Debussy,
Damase
and more!

PROGRAMME

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN
Les Barricades Mystérieuses

LOUIS-CLAUDE DAQUIN
Le Coucou

ARAM KHACHATURIAN, edited by DULOVA
Two Pieces for Harp
I. Oriental Dance
II. Toccata

CAROLINE LIZOTTE
Suite Galactique

(Intermission)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY, arr. DUDLEY
Prelude a l'après midi d'un faune
(harp duo & flute)

JEAN-MICHEL DAMASE
Sicilienne Variée

BIOGRAPHY

Nigel graduated with distinction at his Bachelor of Music Degree from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music of the National University of Singapore, where he was awarded a full merit scholarship. During his studies, he was invited as soloist with the State Philharmonic of Uzbekistan, performing the repertoire of Mozart and Ravel to a sold out concert. He was also chosen to be part of the conservatory orchestra to perform in Korean National University of the Arts (2019). Throughout his years as an undergraduate, he has also attended various music festivals in Europe, learning under critically acclaimed harpists Fabrice Pierre, and Marie-Pierre Langlamet, principal harpist of the Berlin Philharmonic. He has performed with numerous musical ensembles in Singapore, most notably the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and Singapore Chinese Orchestra.

His love for the instrument has compelled him to become a music educator and collaborator. He was a student representative for Singapore at the Southeast Asian Directors of Music conference in 2019, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where students and school leaders actively partake in conversations regarding the advancement of music education in the region, with topics ranging from pedagogy and audience engagement in the 21st century.

In 2020, he co-founded The Harp Quarterly - a platform for like-minded harpists to gather and share harp ensemble music through performances.

Nigel enjoys curating his own content as a show producer. Recently, he co-produced an exciting multidisciplinary livestream concert - UNMASK 2021, that integrated visual arts, live music and recorded music. He also ventured into combining harp with dance through producing the concert Sunset, where he collaborated with flamenco dancers to present an eclectic programme of Spanish and French music. This collaboration was further developed through Spanish Resonances, a sold out concert at Esplanade Recital Studio, with even more harpists from The Harp Quarterly and dancers involved.

He is currently pursuing a Master's Degree at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

PERFORMER'S NOTE

In this recital, experience the harp in different lights, from Couperin's enigmatic Les Barricades Mystérieuses to the twinkling stars in Caroline Lizotte's Suite Galactique. The evolution of music through the ages will be communicated through the harp.

I would like to thank my teacher Gulnara Mashurova, the YST harp studio, friends and loved ones for all their support through my years in YST. I have gained invaluable experience in these five and a half years through making music and art in and outside of this building. This will be my last recital as a student here and I thank you all for spending your Saturday morning with my music! Enjoy the recital!

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN

Les Barricades Mystérieuses

Originally composed for the harpsichord in 1717, *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* is the fifth piece in Couperin's "Ordre 6ème de clavecin" in B-flat major, from his second book of *Pièces de Clavecin*. The meaning of the work's title still remains a mystery and the harpsichordist Luke Arnason has a possible explanation for its meaning:

"The title *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* is probably meant to be evocative rather than a reference to a specific object, musical or otherwise. Scott Ross, in a master class filmed and distributed by Harmonia Mundi, likens the piece to a train. This clearly cannot have been the precise image Couperin was trying to convey, but it is easy to hear in *Les Barricades* the image of a heavy but fast-moving object that picks up momentum. In that sense, the mysterious barricades are perhaps those which cause the "train" to slow down and sometimes stop... This hypothesis seems to fit in with the pedagogical aims of Couperin's music, since the composer presents himself as something of a specialist in building sound through legato"

This rendition presented by the harp is reminiscent of lute playing, with some passages being played near the soundboard, creating a brighter and slightly brittle tone.

LOUIS CLAUDE DAQUIN

Le Coucou

Louis-Claude Daquin was a French composer of Jewish ancestry who wrote in the Baroque and Galant styles. He was a virtuoso organist and harpsichordist. He was a musical prodigy who performed for the court of Louis XIV at the age of six. He was a sought after organist by aristocracy and churches, and also composed a sizeable repertoire for the organ and harpsichord in his lifetime.

His third harpsichord suite, *Pieces de Clavecin*, includes *Le Coucou*, one of his most celebrated pieces. He uses the motif of cuckoo's call as a descending major or minor third, which appears in specific places in the rhythm. This interval changes from a third to a second, fourth, fifth, or sixth depending on the harmony. With this technique, he keeps the cuckoo in the forefront throughout the piece.

ARAM KHACHATURIAN

edited by DULOVA

I. Oriental Dance

II. Toccata

Aram Khachaturian was a Soviet and Armenian composer born in 1903. While following the established musical traditions of Russia, he broadly incorporated Armenian and, to lesser extent, Caucasian, Eastern and Central European, and Middle Eastern peoples' folk music in his works.

The Oriental Dance and Toccata are pieces from the second book of his Album for Children, a collection of short works meant for the developing young pianists. Russian harpist Vera Dulova has edited these two works to be playable by the pedal harp. One of the special edits made was for the Oriental Dance, where the harp makes percussive noises meant to imitate the doira, an Uzbek drum. The harp itself brings a different colour to the Toccata, dialling down some of the percussiveness in the original, incorporating more smooth melodic lines within the constant rhythmic pulse.

CAROLINE LIZOTTE

Suite Galactique

Caroline Lizotte is internationally renowned as a brilliant French-Canadian harpist and composer. Her works for harp are celebrated and performed around the world, in festivals and international competitions for harp, and they are listed among the most influential works of the harp repertoire in late 20th and 21st century.

This piece makes use of various extended techniques for the harp while also incorporating many typical harp gestures that gives a sense of familiarity for the listener while also invoking the feeling of modernity. These are her notes for each of the three movements of Suite Galactique:

Exosphère:

Atmospheric layer approximately 1000 km deep, where the lightest molecules escape the effect of gravity and reach the interplanetary space. The substance is built in the low register of the harp - in the earth - as if we had taken a clod of mud and extracted the water from it, and followed its molecular cycle through several transformations it experiences in the atmosphere. Musically, an ascending feeling - free of gravitational forces - is clearly presented.

CAROLINE LIZOTTE

Suite Galactique

Hymne au Bon Combat:

The warrior sits down around a fire with his companions. They each relate their conquests, and the strangers are welcomed into the circle, because everyone is proud of his life and proud to lead the Good Combat. (Manuel do Guerreiro da Luz/Paulo Coelho) The chattering effect appearing from the very first bars suggests to us that the warrior is exhausted and cold after a hard struggle. Close to the fire, he will warm himself and sing with his friends. 'Organic and interactive' movement for the performer because he or she must feel cold and sing like the warrior. However, avoid lighting a fire...

Scherzo del Pueblo

Translation of 'Scherzo of the People' in Spanish. To my friend living in Spain: 'I am composing the 3rd movement of my Galactical Suite for harp. Funny, it tends to be developing into a very 'agricultural' ternary: thumbs on thorns, hands in hay! Thinking of a possible title: Scherzo for Common People. The music is turning in my mind as inside a meat-grinder ...' And my friend answered: 'Just for fun, say it with pronunciation accents: Scherzo del Pueblo; better than Scherzo Popular.'

CLAUDE DEBUSSY, arr. DUDLEY

Prelude a l'après midi d'un faune

(two harps and flute)

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune (L. 86), or Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, is a symphonic poem for orchestra by Claude Debussy, one of the greatest composers of the Impressionist musical style.

This work was inspired by the poem L'après-midi d'un faune by Stéphane Mallarmé. Mallarmé was initially displeased with his poem being used as the basis of Debussy's work, but after its premiere performance, this was what he wrote to the composer after being deeply moved by the music:

"Your illustration of the Afternoon of a Faun, which presents no dissonance with my text, but goes much further, really, into nostalgia and into light, with finesse, with sensuality, with richness."

In this arrangement by late American harpist Whit Dudley, the flute and two harps advance from being prominent roles in the symphonic poem to taking on the role of the whole orchestra. In this intimate setting, the interweaving of the lines become much clearer for the listener.

Harp: Madelaine Chong
Flute: Yi-Chian Weng

JEAN-MICHEL DAMASE

Sicilienne Variée

Jean-Michel Damase was a French composer who composed extensively for the harp, owing to the fact that his mother was a famous French harpist, Micheline Kahn.

Sicilienne Variée is a harp showpiece in the form of theme and variations. Each variation could be seen to take on different scenes of a day in Paris, from daybreak to the busy evening. Imagine strolling in the street under the morning sun and standing at the foot of the magnificent Eiffel Tower.

This piece concludes "Lights", my final Master's recital. I hope you have indeed seen the harp in different lights and thank you again for all the support!