

EURASIAN EXPEDITION

3:30 PM

SATURDAY 11 OCTOBER 2025

LECTURE HALL



Franz LISZT (1811 – 1886)
Capriccio alla turca sur des motifs de Beethoven

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Nikos SKALKOTTAS (1904 – 1949)
Three Greek Folk Songs
1. *Potamos (River). Andante*
2. *O Elympos ki o Kissavos (Olympus and Kissavos). Lento e piacere – Chorós (Dance)*
3. *Ande kimisou kori mou (Sleep, My Daughter). Andante*

Monica Curro, *Violin*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Béla BARTÓK (1881 – 1945)
Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56 (arr. Székely)
1. *Jocul cu bâță (Stick Dance). Allegro moderato*
2. *Brâul (Sash Dance). Allegro*
3. *Pe loc (In One Spot). Andante*
4. *Buciumeana (Dance from Bucium). Molto moderato*
5. *Poarga Românească (Romanian Polka). Allegro*
6. *Mărunțel (Fast Dance). Allegro – Più allegro*

Monica Curro, *Violin*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Aram KHACHATURIAN (1903 – 1978)
Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano
1. *Andante con dolore, con molto espressione*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Moderato*

Francesco Celata, *Clarinet*
Monica Curro, *Violin*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

TAN Dun (b. 1957)
Sorrow in the Desert from Hero Sonata

Monica Curro, *Violin*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

HOSOKAWA Toshio (b. 1955)
Mai

Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Budhi Ngurah (b. 1958)
Nine Pelog Variations

Monica Curro, *Violin*
Francesco Celata, *Clarinet*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Neeharika SHYJU (b. 2007)
Perumthachan (world premiere)

Monica Curro, *Violin*
Francesco Celata, *Clarinet*
Stefan Cassomenos, *Piano*

Franz LISZT (1811 – 1886)

Capriccio alla turca sur des motifs de Beethoven

Despite the stereotype of Liszt as a kind of revolutionary proto-rockstar, the truth is that he was deeply invested in the music of his forebears, which he endeavoured to bring to wider audiences throughout the whole of his life. About half of all his works are transcriptions and arrangements of music by other composers, chief among them Beethoven, whose nine symphonies he transcribed with such daring fidelity and vision that they remain the most definitive arrangements for piano. The *Caprice in the Turkish Style on Motifs of Beethoven* was written in 1846, one of two works inspired by Beethoven's 1811 incidental music to *The Ruins of Athens*. Here Liszt takes the *Ruins'* Turkish March and Dervishes' Chorus and treats them to a magnificent display of elaboration, at turns charming, whimsical, and furiously virtuosic.

Nikos SKALKOTTAS (1904 – 1949)

Three Greek Folk Songs

1. *Potamos (River). Andante*
2. *O Elympos ki o Kissavos (Olympus and Kissavos). Lento e piacere – Chorós (Dance)*
3. *Ande kimisou kori mou (Sleep, My Daughter). Andante*

Alongside his compatriot Xenakis, Nikos Skalkottas is one of the greatest and most original Greek composers of the 20th century, described by British essayist Hans Keller as a “master of symphonic thought”. A student of Schoenberg, Skalkottas was a fervent exponent of the 12-tone technique, yet throughout his life he remained deeply engaged with the music of his homeland, working in the mid-1930s at the Folk Music Archive in Athens, where he transcribed and analysed Greek folk songs. His output ranges from fiercely complex orchestral works to disarmingly simple folk-based chamber music.

Written around 1945/6, the *Three Greek Folk Songs* for violin and piano belong to this latter vein. With each movement, Skalkottas faithfully renders the original folk tune while enlivening it through vivid harmonic colouring and rhythmic inflection. The result is a suite of utmost purity and concision, intimate in character but rich in atmosphere, subtly embodying what musicologist Katy Romanou characterised as the “earthly strength and elemental nature of Eastern European folk music”.

Béla BARTÓK (1881 – 1945)

Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56 (arr. Székely)

1. *Jocul cu băță (Stick Dance). Allegro moderato*
2. *Brâul (Sash Dance). Allegro*
3. *Pe loc (In One Spot). Andante*
4. *Buciumeana (Dance from Bucium). Molto moderato*
5. *Poarga Românească (Romanian Polka). Allegro*
6. *Mărunțel (Fast Dance). Allegro – Più allegro*

And perhaps no composer understood the depth and latent power of Eastern European folk music better than Béla Bartók. Between 1905 and 1936, he made regular journeys into far-flung and remote rural regions, often with his friend Kodály, to record and transcribe the music of the common people. With large phonograph and wax cylinders in tow, their expeditions ranged from Hungary and neighbouring lands to as far afield as North Africa. The thousands of songs they collected resulted in scores of groundbreaking academic publications. Moreover, both men wove these discoveries into their own musical languages – raw melodies, modal harmonies and irregular rhythms became the lifeblood of their art.

Composed in 1915 for solo piano, the *Romanian Dances* are one of Bartók's most famous and widely played works. In fact, much like Beethoven with his Septet, Bartók gradually became annoyed at their popularity, as they often eclipsed that of his later masterpieces. In 1925, the *Romanian Dances* were adapted for violin and piano by the composer's close friend and collaborator, the great violinist Zoltán Székely. Though lasting barely five or six minutes, they cover a mesmerising range of moods and colours, from the haughty vigour of the *Stick Dance*, to the mystery of *In One Spot*, to the wild ecstasy of the final two dances.

Aram KHACHATURIAN (1903 – 1978)

Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano

1. *Andante con dolore, con molto espressione*
2. *Allegro*
3. *Moderato*

Seemingly always in the shadow of his peers Shostakovich and Prokofiev, Khachaturian was a masterful composer with his own distinctive musical voice and legacy. Though he is mostly remembered now for the *Sabre Dance*, *Lezginka* and the Adagios from his ballets *Gayane* and *Spartacus*, he wrote prolifically in nearly every genre. As head of the Union of Soviet Composers for over 20 years, he was an active and prominent force in Russian musical life, and his extensive use of especially Armenian folk music made him central in the shaping of modern Armenian culture.

One of his earliest works, Khachaturian wrote the Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano in 1932, while he was still a student at the Moscow Conservatory. Despite its youthfulness, the trio already reveals its composer in full command of his craft, with all the rhythmic drive and richly expressive folk influences that would become hallmarks of his style. Opening with stark bell tones in the piano, the first movement unfolds like an improvised gypsy rhapsody, full of beautifully embellished interplay between the clarinet and violin. The second movement takes the form of a scherzo, deftly juxtaposing lyrical poise and frenetic dancelike energy. Khachaturian completes the trio with a remarkable theme and variations based on an Uzbek tune, that run the gamut from pensive melancholy to earthy exuberance.

TAN Dun (born 1957)

Sorrow in the Desert* from *Hero Sonata

Tan Dun is a Chinese-American composer whose work bridges East and West, melding traditional Chinese music with cutting-edge contemporary techniques. Born in Changsha, Hunan Province during the Cultural Revolution, Tan studied at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, before earning a doctorate at Columbia University. He is widely celebrated for his concert music, opera, multimedia works, and award-winning film scores, notably *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, which earned him the Oscar in 2000 and a Grammy in 2002.

Sorrow in the Desert is the fourth and final movement of Tan's *Hero Sonata* for violin and piano, which he adapted in 2016 from his film score to the 2002 epic *Hero*, by director Zhang Yimou. Here the heroine Flying Snow mourns her lover Broken Sword, whom she has just slain in combat amid the vast, windswept sands. Tan evokes her desolation through the rising and falling of the violin's plaintive melody, reminiscent of the sighing of an erhu.

HOSOKAWA Toshio (born 1955)

Mai

Widely hailed as Japan's pre-eminent living composer, Hosokawa Toshio was born in Hiroshima and studied in Tokyo and Berlin. His music is renowned for its striking blend of Western avant-garde techniques with traditional Japanese music and aesthetic principles. Winner of over a dozen awards, he has composed nearly 200 works in virtually every genre, and is played by world-leading opera houses and ensembles, including the Bavarian State Opera and the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics.

Written in 2012 for solo piano, *Mai* (舞) literally means 'dance', but in Japanese tradition it refers especially to the stately, circling movements of ancient court rituals and Noh theatre, where grace and restraint carry centuries-old symbolism. Within this broad tradition, Hosokawa was inspired particularly by a dance called *Seigaiha* (literally "Blue Sea Waves"), the movements of which reflect the rising and falling of the sea. In Hosokawa's stark, brutally minimalist imagining, the pianist's left hand strikes out a steady, repeated rhythmic pattern while the right hand weaves a highly ornamented melody, which together evoke the constant swell of the sea and the timeless cycle of nature.

Budhi Ngurah (born 1958)
Nine Pelog Variations

Born in Jember, East Java, Budhi Ngurah is a composer, conductor, cellist, music director and academic, with over 70 compositions to his name. His works, combining elements of traditional Indonesian music with Western forms and techniques, have been performed throughout Asia and Europe. Currently Budhi Ngurah is a lecturer at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts and the Immanuel Christian University, and also a conductor of the Yogyakarta Royal Orchestra.

Written in 1987, the *Nine Pelog Variations* take their name (and musical basis) from the *pelog*, a type of pentatonic scale central to the gamelan music of Bali and Java. Essentially, Budhi Ngurah's creative exploration of this scale system and its possibilities is the work's main *raison d'être* – the composer himself stresses that this is purely absolute music, not meant to be an expression of personal feelings or the telling of a story in the conventional sense. Originally conceived for standard piano trio, this afternoon we hear the composer's arrangement of the work with bass clarinet instead of cello.

Neeharika SHYJU (born 2007)
***Perumthachan* (world premiere)**

Neeharika Shyju is a year 12 classical voice student currently studying at the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School. Her musical journey began when she started learning Indian classical music at the age of five, before taking up Western classical voice when she was 12 years old. Composition began as something to pass the time during lockdown, but Neeharika quickly embraced it with a passion, undertaking it as a second subject at her school alongside singing. As part of Artology's "To Country" program, her piece *Respect the Land* was premiered by the Queensland Youth Orchestra in 2022. This piece was extended and re-orchestrated for the Melbourne Youth Orchestra to perform in 2024. Currently, Neeharika continues to explore her heritage through the composition of works across many genres.

Of her new work *Perumthachan*, Neeharika writes, "*Perumthachan* is based on a timeless legend from Kerala (southern India) that tells of a master craftsman (Perumthachan) who follows the traditions of his craft with utmost devotion. However, these traditions are challenged by his equally gifted, yet rebellious son. Their bond of love gradually twists into rivalry, symbolising the conflict between tradition and innovation. In the end, Perumthachan kills his son by throwing a heavy chisel at him – but was it a flash of anger at youthful hubris, the sting of jealousy, or just a father trying to save his son from his own recklessness? The legend leaves it ambiguous, hinting at a deeper truth: love once pure, ruptured by pride and the conflict between mind and heart."

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