

## **Cheryl Toh & Vivien Chong**

Having met at the age of 13 in their secondary school, Cheryl and Vivien have shared the passion of making music for 6 years and explored many duet pieces, ranging from the Classical period to the 20th Century. Through the past 6 years of being in the same school, they have both pursued their passion for music through taking up music as one of their examinable subjects, through the Music Elective Programme (MEP) offered by MOE schools. Some pieces they have performed together include Saint-Saëns's Aquarium from Carnival of the Animals, Dvořák's Slavonic Dances, Op. 46 No. 1 and Mozart's Sonata in D Major for Two Pianos, K. 448. These pieces are mostly performed for their MEP Examination at the 'O' Level and 'A' Level. They have performed at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music Orchestra Hall in 2016 as part of their annual Music Elective Programme (MEP) concert, @rtikulation.

Today they present three pieces: Beethoven's Sonata in D Major for Four Hands, Op. 6, II: Rondo. Moderato, Dvořák's Slavonic Dances Op. 72, No. 2 in E Minor and Poulenc's Sonata for Four Hands, FP8, III: Finale. Très vite.

## **Sonata in D Major, Op. 6, II: Rondo. Moderato**

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770 - 1827)

One of the more considerable four-hands work that Beethoven wrote, this piece was composed between 1796 and 1797 and published in 1797. Piano duets written by Beethoven were for a wide range of people; for students and also aristocratic acquaintances and friends. While he was busy building up his reputation as a pianist and a composer during this time, he also had to earn his income through teaching, which he actually very much disliked. It is therefore speculated that this piece might have been composed as a teaching piece. However, it still portrays the maturity of Beethoven's compositional style; the main theme of both movements are ornamented when they reappear in the end of the movement, rather than just restating them.

The cheerful and light-hearted second movement is written in a five-part rondo form (ABACA) ; section B is presented in the minor mode, while section C remains in the major and contrasts more gently with the main theme. As mentioned, the theme reappears in a slightly different form when section A returns; the theme is developed in the last section, leading to the grand ending.

## **Slavonic Dances Op. 72, No. 2 in E minor**

Antonín Dvořák (1841 - 1904)

'*Slavonic Dances*' was composed by Dvorak, a Czech Romantic composer, for piano four hands. It was commissioned by Brahms' publisher, Simrock, who was introduced to Dvorak by Brahms himself, and composed in 1878 as *Slavonic Dances Op. 46*. The second set, *Slavonic Dances Op. 72* was composed in 1886 and commissioned once more by Simrock who wished to mirror the success achieved by the first set. Although Dvorak was initially reluctant in composing the second set of '*Slavonic Dances*', in the end he reportedly said that he enjoyed composing the second set immensely.

The '*Slavonic Dances*' draw on Slavic folk music and has also been orchestrated in 1887. '*Slavonic Dances Op. 72, No. 2 in E minor*' is a dumka, a sad and melancholic Ukrainian dance with a lively and contrasting middle section. A three-beat dance, resembling a polonaise, known as starodávny, and begins with a very calm and sorrowful melody. After the cheerful melody returns once more, the music then fades away with a *pianissimo*.

## **Sonata for Four Hands, FP8, III: Finale. Très vite**

Francis Poulenc (1899 - 1963)

Composed by 20th Century French composer and pianist, this piece is the only work originally written for piano four hands by Poulenc. It is one of his earlier works, written in 1918, and revised in 1939. It had been rumoured that Poulenc wrote the work in a way such that he could have a more intimate contact with his student, whom he had played the piece with. A tongue-in-cheek piece filled with youthful vigour, all its three movements incorporate very lively ostinato figures, exotic harmonies, and popular-sounding tunes. This was very typical of Poulenc and his fellow French composers (Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud and Germaine Tailleferre), who were part of the group of rising young composers in France, known as Les Six. This group of young French composers were heavily influenced by the musical style of Erik Satie and Igor Stravinsky; this influence on Poulenc can be easily identified in the melodic simplicity of this piece. Its almost barbarous rhythms and repetitive melodic lines could also have been influenced by Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. The final movement is reminiscent of Bartók's folk song based compositional style.

The "Finale" is a very animated and vivacious dance with occasional reappearances of the first movement's spicy flavor. Though it follows the form of the classical sonata, it does not embody the traditional development characteristics. The piece closes unexpectedly with a sudden change in dynamics to pianississimo and ends on a polytonal chord, which contrasts greatly from the previous diatonic passage.