



Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

STUDENT RECITAL

31 October 2019
6pm, von Kuster Hall
Megaria Halim, *piano*

Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano

John CAGE
(1912 - 1992)

Sonata I

Sonata II

Sonata III

Sonata IV

First Interlude

Sonata V

Sonata VI

Sonata VII

Sonata VIII

Second Interlude

Third Interlude

Sonata IX

Sonata X

Sonata XI

Sonata XII

Fourth Interlude

Sonata XIII

Sonata XIV and XV : "Gemini" - After The Work by Richard Lippold

Sonata XVI

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts in
Performance degree.*



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I started learning the piano as a child in Medan, Indonesia, under Ms. Elly, Ms. Nini Irawati and Ms. Srilian Putti Leo. Their passion and enthusiasm in teaching nurtured the beginnings of my interest in this instrument. I later moved to Singapore for my undergraduate studies and finally graduated from LASALLE with First Class Honors in Classical Music Performance under the tutelage of the Polish born pianist, Mr. Arkadiusz Bialak. Thanks to my mentors, friends, and the opportunities I encountered during that time, I became exposed to many new contemporary pieces that I have never heard before. I soon realized that these new compositions are not something weird, or so difficult to understand, as I had thought it was. They might have abandoned the conventions of traditional harmony, or compositional structures, or performance practices, but each composition reflects the composer's constellation of ideas in the world of sounds, and how they attempt to communicate their ideas across to the performers and the listeners. Since I was a student in LASALLE, I started getting involved in various collaborative opportunities with my fellow musicians and colleagues from the music department, dance, and musical theatre. Three years ago, wanting to go more deeply into this wondrous world of music, I decided to further my studies in Canada, at the University of Western Ontario, and I am currently doing my DMA under Professor John Hess.

Although there have been composers who placed objects inside the piano to create certain effects, the "prepared piano" is usually credited to John Cage after he explored it extensively. When he was first commissioned to write music for a dance performance some time between 1938 to 1940, he thought that the character of the dance required a percussion ensemble. The hall in which this dance was to be staged however, did not have room for a percussion ensemble and the only thing that was available was a grand piano. Cage came up with the idea of inserting various objects between the strings, creating a whole new universe of sounds, meaning one pianist could produce the sounds similar to a percussion group. With this, the prepared piano became one of Cage's key musical resources over the next decade.

In the mid-1940s, John Cage had somewhat of a crisis regarding musical communication as he felt that audience was unable to grasp his intentions. He thus said "I was determined to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication." Soon after, Cage discovered Eastern philosophies and started studying Hindu philosophy and Zen Buddhism. In these Eastern philosophies, experiences should strive to be unmediated, preconceptions and even the composer's will suspended. With the determinacy of the composer's intention out of the way, Cage was no longer constrained by conventional rules and preconceived beliefs in his creations.

The Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano is a cycle of 20 short pieces composed between 1946 - 1948. The entire cycle consists of four sets of four sonatas, each separated from the next by one or two interludes. They draw upon the Hindu concept of *rasa*, or permanent emotions: four light moods (the Erotic, Heroic, Wondrous, and Comic) and four dark moods (the Odious, Furious, Terrible, and Pathetic), and a common tendency of the other eight, Tranquillity.

Cage was never clear how these correspond within the cycle, but if we were to take what Cage believed about Eastern philosophies, then it is not so much what he intended each piece to represent, but what the sounds draw out from us as the interpreters of his music, and at the same time, these do not have to be confined to any stable representations — they might change as one grows and develop and interact with the world.

In preparing the piano, Cage has a very clear idea of the effects he wanted and the materials to be used: a sliver of rubber dampening the sound, a thicker piece producing a drum beat; a screw with two nuts sounding like a tiny tambourine, two bolts six inches apart producing a golden, shimmering sound. Although these preparations are detailed painstakingly at the beginning of the score, it is also up to the pianist to adjust the materials until the desired sound is obtained.

Thank you Professor John Hess for always being such a rock,
for believing in me even through all my mistakes and stumbles,
and for inspiring me on my journey as a musician.