



Chua Mia Tee, *Epic Poem of Malaya*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm, Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Movements in Time

Artworks from the National Gallery

A SUITE FOR ORCHESTRA BY KELLY TANG

MUSIC
COMMISSIONING
SERIES

Education Notes by Benjamin Yeo

Commissioned by Foundation for The Arts and Social Enterprise

The Composition

Commissioned by Foundation for The Arts and Social Enterprise to inaugurate its Music Commissioning Series, Cultural Medallion recipient Kelly Tang invites you on a captivating journey through his remarkable imagination, as he unveils his musical interpretation of the National Gallery Singapore's artworks like never before.

INSPIRATION

The suite for orchestra was inspired by art pieces from the National Gallery Singapore. Do you know that there were many other composers who have also written music inspired by artworks?

THE GALLERY

Do you know that the National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution which oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art?

ART & MUSIC

Have you ever wondered how Art works may be represented musically? How do we listen with our eyes and see with our ears?

Photo Credit: National Gallery Singapore



Movements in Time – Artworks from the National Gallery

A SUITE FOR ORCHESTRA BY KELLY TANG



What is a Suite?

A suite (pronounced 'sweet'), meaning 'followed', is a collection of pieces, or movements, grouped together to form a complete work.

The different movements heard in this work are below.
We will discuss more about these movements later...

Are you able to arrange them in the performed order of sequence?

	PRELUDE
	INTERLUDE
	CONTEMPLATION
	DANCE
	THE IDEALIST
	MYSTERY
	ENIGMA

DID YOU KNOW?

During the Baroque era (around 1600 – 1750), numerous suites, typically comprising dances, were composed specifically for the harpsichord, a keyboard instrument. In the 19th century, it became common for composers to assemble orchestral suites by combining various pieces they had originally written for ballets or operas. Nowadays, composers have the freedom to chain related works into a cohesive 'suite' of their choosing!



Kelly Tang

Let's find out what the composer says about this work...

Movements in Time – Artworks from the National Gallery is a suite for orchestra inspired by artworks from National Gallery Singapore. The suite begins with a *Fanfare* reflecting the grandeur of the Gallery's building. A heroic movement follows entitled *The Idealist*, inspired by Chua Mia Tee's painting *Epic Poem of Malaya*.

This leads to a *Mystery* scherzo based on Simryn Gill's macabre photograph of a dilapidated building from her *Standing Still* series.

In the *Interlude* that ensues, the oboe and clarinet restate the introductory *Fanfare* theme. This paves the way for the graceful *Contemplation* movement, tracing the gentle contours of Eng Tow's *Bowls*. A sudden storm breaks this peace, which clears when the graceful theme returns.

The audience is then confronted by the probing questions of the *Enigma* movement, inspired by Han Sai Por's organic and alien sculpture from her *Extinction* series. *Movements in Time – Artworks from the National Gallery* closes with a festive *Dance* inspired by Sarkasi Said Tzee's celebratory batik painting *Voices of the Soul*.

Each of these movements can be performed individually or in any combination the performer prefers. *Movements in Time – Artworks from the National Gallery* hopes to attract more concertgoers to view the expressive and evocative art pieces displayed at the National Gallery Singapore.

Artworks from the National Gallery

Although written as a seven-part (or -movement) suite, only five were direct musical responses to the artworks - *The Idealist*, *Mystery*, *Contemplation*, *Enigma*, and **Dance*. *The Fanfare*, on the other hand, is an opening movement for the suite, just like the introduction of a story book, while the *Interlude* serves as a short breather in between movements - like taking a short tea break before continuing to explore the rest of the museum!

Fanfare

The *Fanfare* is often referred to as a short ceremonial tune or flourish played on brass instruments, typically to introduce something or someone important. In this work, it functions as an introduction to the suite, and the theme begins with the trumpets and horns, both of which are from the brass family. It is important to understand that it is not always necessary for fanfares to be played solely by the brass section, as in this movement. Listen to how the strings and woodwind instruments help enhance the movement through a combination of different sound colours!

*The Concert Band arrangement of the movement, *Dance* by Benjamin Yeo is now available!

1. The Idealist

Described as a heroic movement by the composer, this painting by Chua Mia Tee captures and inspires a strong desire to instill Malayan nationalism in the younger generation. A gathering of students attentively listens, captivated by their leader as they recite nationalistic poems about Malaya. The faint glimmer of light amidst the dark clouds symbolises the promise of brighter days ahead with the achievement of independence.



Chua Mia Tee
Epic Poem of Malaya
1955
Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

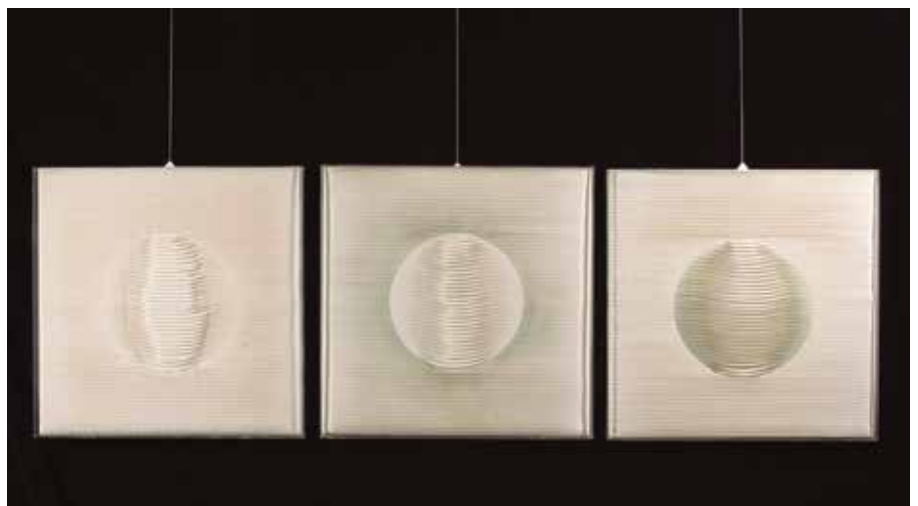
2. *Mystery*

Standing Still comprises 117 photographs created by Simryn Gill throughout her three-year journey across the Malaysian countryside from 2000 to 2003. These photographs were captured in the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis, a period marked by numerous abandoned and unfinished building projects. The artist depicts her experience of encountering and confronting each of these locations simultaneously. She describes them as a moment frozen in time, where the remnants of the past lie in ruins, neglected and unattended, while the prospects of the future have also been abandoned and are starting to crumble. It is a state of stagnation with no viable path forward or backward. The composer musically responded to Gill's Photograph #28 of a dilapidated building with a sense of mystery in the music.



Simryn Gill
Standing Still #28
2000 – 2003
Chromogenic print, 31.4 x 31.6 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

Eng Tow
Bowls
1979
Cloth and thread, 62.5 x 61.5 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore © Tow Eng



Interlude

An *Interlude* is a general term for music played or sung between the main parts of either a musical work or, occasionally, a non-musical event. This short interlude of approximately a minute brings back the musical theme from the fanfare at the start. Are you able to recognise this theme? You may notice that the introductory role of the trumpet and horn (from the Fanfare) is now replaced by the oboe and clarinet. What a way to contrast!

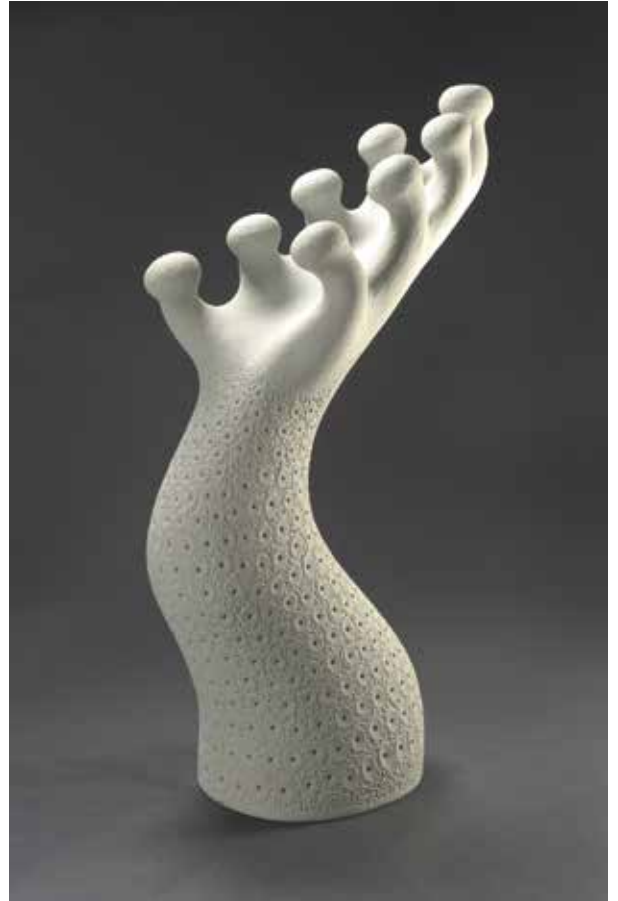
3. *Contemplation*

Eng Tow, a Singaporean artist, has gained recognition for her textile paintings referred to as "cloth reliefs". Her series called *Bowls* showcases her profound grasp of shapes, form, and depth through sculptural paintings. The composer hopes to musically trace the gentle contours of the *Bowls* through sensitive touches in his flowing musical lines. A contrasting faster middle section is then heard before the lyrical theme returns again.

4. *Enigma*

Han Sai Por is well-known for her sculptures carved in stone, bringing to life figurative forms and organic shapes from hefty granite blocks. Inspired by this unique and alien-looking appearance, the composer wrote this movement reflecting his impression of the sculpture using shifting tonalities, dissonances and mysterious-sounding tone colours.

Han Sai Por
Extinction series 12
2009
Textured granite with sandblast finish, 153 x 100 x 55 cm
Collection of National Gallery Singapore



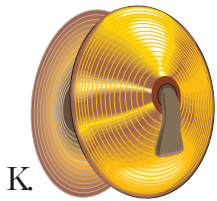
Sarkasi Said Tzee
Voices of the Soul
Undated
Batik, 77 x 111 cm
Gift of the artist
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

5. *Dance*

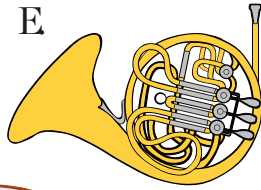
Sarkasi Said Tzee, a highly acclaimed Singaporean batik painter, gained international recognition for his unique application of a wax-resisting technique in batik painting, his vibrant colour choices, and his frequent portrayals of the natural world. The festive impression of the painting has inspired the composer to create a celebratory dance as the suite comes to a close. Listen out for the hand claps and foot stampings in the midst of some exciting changing meters!

Can You Name Them All?

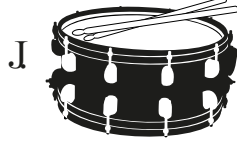
This suite is written for the full orchestra.
Let us now look at the instrumentation of this work!



K.



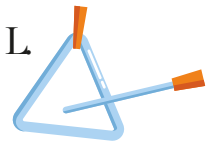
E.



J.



F.

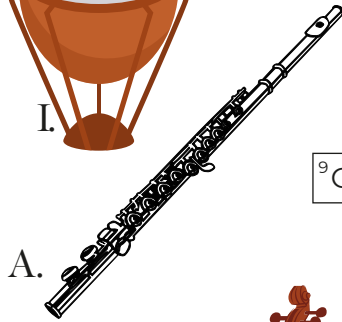


L.

C.



I.



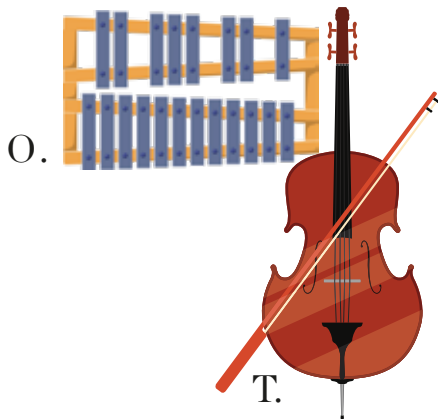
A.



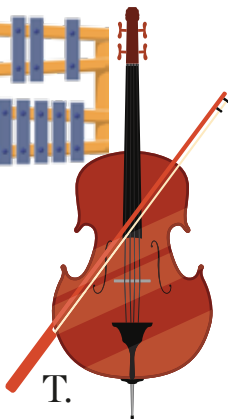
N.



S.



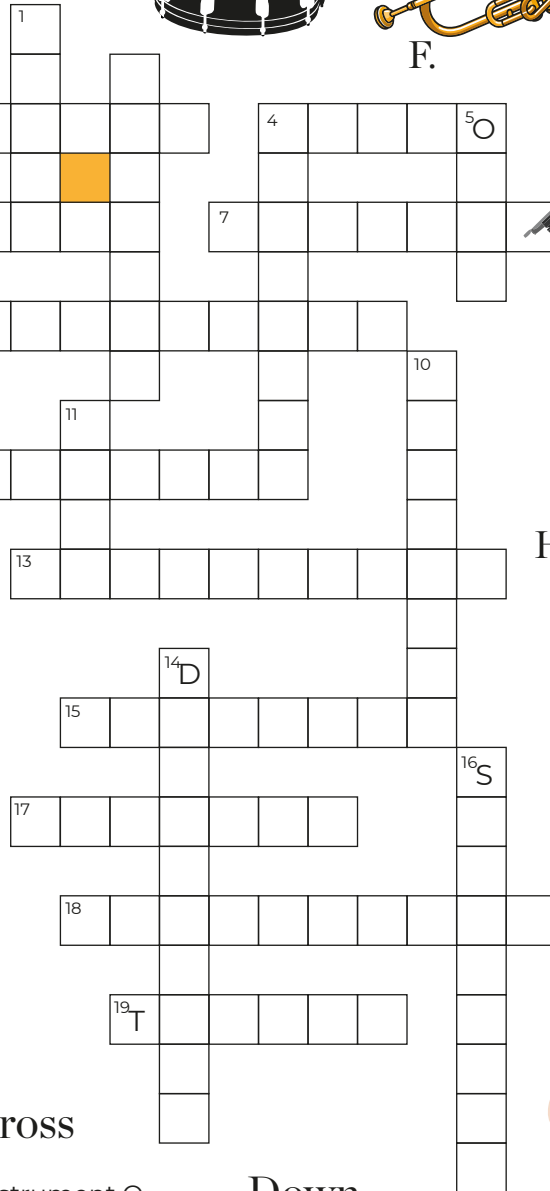
O.



T.

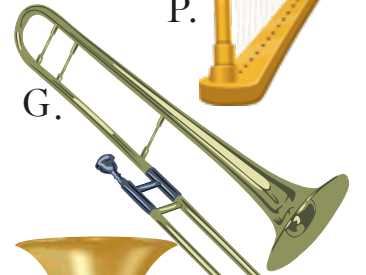


D.



Q.

P.



G.

H.



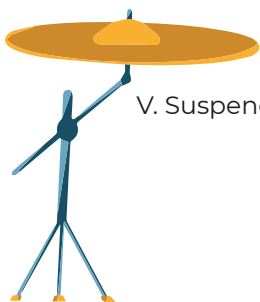
R.



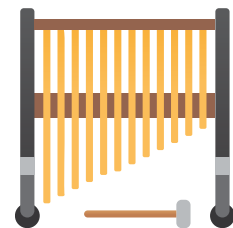
M.



B.



V. Suspended Cymbal



U. Tubular Bells

Across

- 3. Instrument Q
- 4. Instrument S
- 6. Instrument P
- 7. Instrument D
- 9. Instrument O
- 12. Instrument F
- 13. Instrument M
- 15. Instrument G
- 17. Instrument K
- 18. Instrument E
- 19. Instrument N

Down

- 1. Instrument R
- 2. Instrument I
- 4. Instrument C
- 5. Instrument B
- 8. Instrument A
- 10. Instrument L
- 11. Instrument H
- 14. Instrument T
- 16. Instrument J

Did You Know ...

Kelly Tang is not the only composer who has written music based on artworks. There were many well-known composers before him who have done the same as well!



MODEST MUSSORGSKY



AARON COPLAND



OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Suggested Exploration & Activity

Modest Mussorgsky, a renowned Russian composer, is widely recognised for his notable work *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874). This composition originally emerged as a collection of piano pieces inspired by artworks displayed at a memorial exhibition dedicated to Victor Hartmann, a close friend of Mussorgsky and a talented Russian architect and artist (1842-1873). With the exception of the introduction, called Promenade, the set comprises ten pieces, each with descriptive titles linked to specific drawings and paintings by Hartmann showcased in the exhibition.

- Research and list down all ten pieces. Listen to each one of them carefully.
- Explore the visual representation of the artworks that inspired Mussorgsky's music and examine the potential connections between the visuals and the musical pieces.
- Identify interesting similarities between Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Kelly Tang's *Movements in Time – Artworks from the National Gallery*