

# BraviSSimó!

VOL. 08 NO. 01

January 2007

The quarterly newsletter of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra

MITA (P) 024/07/2006

A colourful  
Latin Pops Fiesta

A good year for  
Vladimir Feltsman

The other SSO  
across the ocean

Lynnette Seah wins  
Cultural Medallion



**A Good Year  
for Music**

## EDITORIAL

2006 ended on a strong note for the SSO, with three wildly successful Latin pops concerts in October, and the ever popular Babies Proms and Christmas Concerts in December. In 2007 the SSO celebrates her 28<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 6 with the premiere of Leong Yoon Pin's *Piano Concerto*. And that's not the only reason for excitement. On March 5, an invigorating experience awaits you as the SSO performs *Singapore: A Geopolitical Utopia* written by Russian composer Vladimir Martynov. We also bring you an interview with SSO Co-Leader Lynnette Seah, who recently won the 2006 Cultural Medallion for her contribution to the arts.

Our best wishes for a very happy new year!

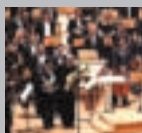
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### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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Co-Editor	Cindy Lim
Contributors	-



On the cover: SSO performs Vivaldi's Four Seasons with Cho-Liang Lin



**OKKO KAMU**  
conductor



# Rachmaninov

## PIANO CONCERTOS



Sat, 27 Jan  
**JEAN-PHILIPPE  
COLLARD**



Fri, 2 Feb  
**NIKOLAI  
DEMIDENKO**



Sat, 10 Feb  
**VLADIMIR  
FELTSMAN**

7.30pm  
**Esplanade Concert Hall**

**Tickets**  
\$11 - \$60 from **SISTIC**  
(6348 5555 / [www.sistic.com](http://www.sistic.com))  
Booking fees apply

[www.sso.org.sg](http://www.sso.org.sg)

# Lynnette Seah wins Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest accolade in the arts

As a child, Singapore Symphony Orchestra's Co-Leader Lynnette Seah sacrificed childhood hobbies to practise on her violin. Her efforts have paid off – she was named a winner of the 2006 Cultural Medallion.

## Breaking news

"I was in Kuala Lumpur in June for a weekend break when I received an SMS from the SSO's General Manager informing me of my win," she recalled. "I was having lunch with my student from Batu Pahat and his father at the Shangri-la Hotel." She was in seventh heaven indeed.

Lynnette, along with local painter Tan Choh Tee, were the first two recipients to be given the Cultural Medallion – Singapore's highest art award – by President S R Nathan at the Istana on October 20. The award comes with an \$80,000 project grant.

## Keeping mum

She added, "I was so excited and happy, but had to keep the news to myself as it was supposed to be embargoed till the week of the ceremony. So I only told my sons and family members. We had a quiet dinner celebration at the Hua Ting Restaurant in Orchard Hotel when my older son returned from his studies in London in July."

Lynnette was SSO's Acting Concertmaster and Assistant Leader when it was formed in 1979, and is currently its Co-Leader. She has performed as soloist with orchestras such as the Zurich Symphony and Janacek Philharmonic, and has twice represented Singapore as Assistant Leader of the World Philharmonic Orchestra.

## Solid beginnings

It was Lynnette's mother Madam Lau Biau Chin who was her main influence, giving her piano lessons at five. She started on the violin at six with Goh Soon Tioe and later Alphonso Anthony. "She instilled in me the discipline to practise everyday for two hours, even as a little girl," she recounted. "She was my accompanist in my performances and brought me to concerts. I also thank God for His gift of music to me."

At 12, Lynnette won a scholarship to the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan. She was also awarded the Outstanding Young Musicians Award for being the youngest member of the World Camp in Adelaide, Australia where she was appointed Associate Leader of the Bishop Symphony Orchestra.

That same year she represented Singapore in the Southeast Asian Violin Competition, and won a scholarship to study at the Hannover Hochschule for Music in Germany. She has



worked with renowned teachers including David Mankowitz, Friedrich von Hausegger, Karel Sneberger, Yfrah Neaman and Dorothy DeLay.

## Meeting the President

She said, "I am deeply honoured to also be the first to receive the award from President Nathan. During the presentation he said to me 'I am very pleased to give you this award personally'. I was choked with emotion but had to control my tears. There were eight photographers present and I had to give a short thank you speech too!"

With the grant, she will embark on her first CD recording in March and hopefully launch it by June 2007. "It will comprise of my favourite pieces and will be easy listening music to soothe the music lover," she added.

## A shining example

The violinist will tell you that after winning the award, her work at the SSO remains her greatest priority, "My dedication and giving 150 percent remains the same. My growth and development as a violinist continues as always."

Added Lynnette, "In my 27 years with the SSO, I feel very proud and elated whenever we receive standing ovations on our tours, like last year in New York's Lincoln Center, France and Spain. The SSO is now a world-class orchestra and all of us in Singapore should be proud of it." ■



Lynnette receiving the Cultural Medallion from President S R Nathan

## Young Pianist Lim Yan wins Young Artist Award

The Young Artist Award, a "junior" version of the Cultural Medallion, was awarded to Lim Yan at the Arts Awards in the Istana. The 26-year-old UK-trained pianist inaugurated the Young Virtuoso Recital series of the Singapore International Piano Festival in 2005 and has performed with the SSO on three occasions. In January 2007, he will give the world premiere of Leong Yoon Pin's *Piano Concerto* with the SSO directed by Lan Shui.

# SSO makes its mark in the Singapore Encyclopaedia



Launched with a big bang at the Istana in September last year, *Singapore: The Encyclopedia* lists, among its 2560 articles, significant entries on the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, its musicians and directors. The orchestra had a column of its own, and featured prominently in the entry of *Classical Music in Singapore*. Music Director Lan Shui, Resident Conductor Lim Yau and Conductor Emeritus Choo Hoey headed the list of Who's Who in Singapore culture. Also present in this select group were violinists Lynnette Seah (Co-Leader and most recent recipient of the

Cultural Medallion) and Chan Yoong Han (Fixed Chair).

Two former SSO Composers-in-Residence Leong Yoon Pin and Phoon Yew Tien made the final cut, as did Chairman Professor Cham Tao Soon and Honorary Chairman Tan Boon Teik, who were noted for their outstanding contributions in their academic and legal careers respectively. Among current SSO Directors, former Minister-of-State Dr Aline Wong and Professor Bernard Tan were similarly honoured. SSO's performing venues,

Victoria Concert Hall and Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay, were also profiled.

All the classical music entries in *Singapore: The Encyclopaedia* were written by BraviSSimO!'s editor Chang Tou Liang, who felt that SSO's vital role in Singapore culture, history and society should not go unheralded. Published by Editions Didier Millet, the editorial team was headed by Professor Tommy Koh. This handsomely presented and comprehensive guide to everything you need to know about Singapore retails at all major bookstores for \$75. ■

04

BraviSSimO!

## Latin Pops Fiesta

### An SSO first, and yet another hit!

Latin Grammy-winning jazz flautist Nestor Torres joined the SSO in two first-ever symphonic pops concerts at the Victoria Concert Hall on October 28. The rare pops concerts – probably one of the first in Asia – followed Torres' celebrated tour of Japan and Taiwan.

Conducting the SSO was Portuguese-American musician Jacomo Bairos, who is also SSO's Principal Tubist. Well-known tunes such as *Besame Mucho*, *Café Cubano* and *Over the Rainbow*, as well as world music from Torres' new CD *Dances, Meditations, and Prayers* – saw the audience swaying to the Latin beat. Several Torres fans even joined him in Latin dance moves at the end of the matinee performance. With the success of SSO's first symphonic pops, lovers of light music can look forward to further such collaborations in the future. ■



Nestor Torres works his magic

## From Singapore with love, From Russia with music



Vladimir Martynov and his wife Tatiana Grindenko

The SSO will perform a special concert *Singapore: A Symphony* at the Esplanade on March 5. Commissioned by the Singapore Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Mr Michael Tay, this performance will open the Second Russia-Singapore Business Forum. The commissioned symphony was composed by Russian composer Vladimir Martynov (creator of the wonderfully serene work *Come In!*, recorded by Gidon

Kremer and KremerATA Baltica), inspired by a week-long stay in Singapore in early 2005, when he was exposed to our nation's ethnic and cultural diversity.

The SSO will perform alongside the renowned Russian violinist Tatiana Grindenko, string ensemble Opus Posth and Moscow's Vasiliev Choir. Tickets at \$25 will be available from 17 January 2007. ■

## Baby's day out



Children made themselves comfortable on stage at the end



The cheque presentation



Every child has her day

The wildly popular SSO Babies Proms returned for the fifth year, playing to over 3000 parents and children over five sessions on December 1 and 2. Held at the Victoria Concert Hall and helmed by the inimitable conductor Peter Moore, little ones marched to Sousa's *Liberty March* and joined the orchestra musicians on stage for the grand finale. Some lucky children randomly selected from the audience also had a chance to conduct the orchestra from the podium, resulting in vastly differing "interpretations"!

The fifth finale show, held in the afternoon of December 2, was an exclusive session for the sponsor Dumex and special guests. Mr Bjorn Lynggaard Olesen, Managing Director of Dumex Malaysia Sdn Bhd, presented a cheque for their sponsorship of \$50,000 to SSO Chairman Prof Cham Tao Soon and Audience Development & Outreach Committee Chairman Prof Bernard Tan. The Guest-of-Honour was Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister of State for Finance and Transport. Judging by the vociferous response, they clearly had a smashing good time. ■

## Adults' night out

They turned up not knowing what to expect, and ended up being wowed by the wonderful world of classical music and what it has to offer. Led by Peter Moore, the SSO's first-ever Adults Proms concerts on December 8 and 9 were a fun and friendly way to be introduced to classical music.

Similar in spirit with the Babies Proms, the adult audience was encouraged to gather near the stage for a closer look at the musicians and the soloists. They gamely responded with fists in the air and an intense roar at the end of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Just an ideal way to get mummies and daddies involved in good classical music! ■



Breaking down the barriers of classical music

## Reaching out at ...



3000 people showed up for SSO's concert at the racecourse

### The Racecourse

The Singapore Racecourse at Kranji came alive with the music of the Beatles and Johann Strauss on October 1. Over 3000 people lapped up the delightful programme consisting of Johann Strauss' Overture to *Die Fledermaus* and a medley of well-known Beatles' hits. In celebration of Children's Day, party packs were handed out to the little ones. This concert was a community project by the SSO and the Singapore Turf Club. ■

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BraviSSim!



SSO plays to 800 Tampines residents

### Tampines Central

Over 800 people, joined by their MP Mr Ong Kian Min, gathered at Tampines Central on October 8 for a free SSO concert. Part of the SPH Gift of Music series, the SSO performed signature Malay tunes by composer P. Ramlee, as well as Rossini's *Thieving Magpie Overture* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol*. This concert follows the success of a similar concert held in Geylang Serai in August. ■



Musicians Chan Yoong Han, Tan Kang Ming, Tan Wee Hsin and Guo Hao

### Orchard MRT

Orchard MRT station was filled with Christmas music and light classics on December 17, as a SSO string quartet gave an hour-long live performance in a show of support for the SMRT Silver Tribute Fund. Proceeds of the fundraising drive will benefit eight elderly homes. Representatives from the homes as well as SMRT senior management were present. Many weekend shoppers also stopped in their midst to revel in the music, and some tourists took the opportunity to pose with the musicians. ■



### Valentine's Day Soiree

Catch the romance this February 14 at the Singapore Symphony Orchestra Valentine's Day Soiree and indulge in a delightful evening of romantic rhythms and tantalizing treats amidst the lush greenery of Bukit Timah. "An Enchanted Evening: Music for Music

Lovers" will be held at 7pm at one of Singapore's grand private homes. For enquiries, please contact Ms Tan Bee Kheng at 6336 6277 or beekheng@sso.org.sg. ■

# Bring on the Newbies!

The Singapore Symphony Chorus is growing and has some new faces. What made these good people trade in their precious Monday evenings watching *Desperate Housewives* for choir rehearsals? Is it the thrill of performing at the Esplanade? Or is it a deep love of the great choral works of Beethoven, Mozart, Verdi *et al*? Perhaps they are simply honing their potential to score in the karaoke bars. We find out...



The choir performing Haydn's Creation

## Why I Joined The SSC

"I enjoy singing classical choral music and getting to know people from different walks of life."

Claudio Caduff, Bass (Banking)

"I simply love singing! And I get to perform many favourite choral works in the SSC."

Frederick Toh, Tenor (Civil service)

"Of course all of us love to sing... that's why we joined the choir. But rehearsals every Monday night give me more than that. It's a great way to get a weekly dose of great music and great people."

Tracy Wang, Alto (Medicine)

"Classical music is beautiful, and the best way to experience this beauty is to be part of it."

Cheng Shi Yuan, soprano (Research)

"I love to have that 'goose bump' feeling when singing."

Carol Cheng, Alto (Music education)

"I joined the SSC to improve my singing within an ensemble, as I want to study music at university and later voice at music college. I also hope to improve my awareness of pitch while learning to sing in harmony. I'm really glad to have been accepted into the SSC and have enjoyed it ever since!"

Emma Price, Soprano (Pre-university studies)

"I enjoy singing classical music and welcomed the opportunity to performing with our national symphony orchestra."

Evelyn Lee, Alto (Pharmaceuticals)

"I sing because I love the act of singing, the music, the thrill and the beauty of concerts, and because singers and musicians are fun people. As we say in German, 'Wo man singt da lass dich nieder, böse Menschen haben keine Lieder.' Or 'Where people

sing you can settle down, because evil people don't have any songs."

Bernardo Foth, Tenor (Research)

"It's a rare opportunity to be able to sing with the SSO."

Ellen Loh, Alto (Environmental health)

"Music is a way of life! I really appreciate singing in the SSC as it lifts up my soul!"

Karen Aw, Soprano (Music)

"Bus fare to rehearsals – \$1.28

Bow tie for performance – \$30

Satisfaction after a performance well done –

Priceless!"

Norman Lee, Tenor (Engineering)

## Want to join the SSC?

Interested in singing with the SSC? If you can read music and have a good sense of rhythm and pitch, contact the outreach coordinator at [outreach@symphonychorus.sg](mailto:outreach@symphonychorus.sg) (ph: 9734 2244) or visit our webpage: [www.symphonychorus.sg](http://www.symphonychorus.sg)



# Vladimir Feltsman

## A Good Year

08

Bravissimo!



"Life is good," piano virtuoso Vladimir Feltsman stated unequivocally. He has just moved into a new house in upstate New York in New Paltz, and holds a packed schedule performing, conducting and teaching. "We have a nice house and three dogs," he continued. "Just being home with my wife is good enough for me. I do not like to travel much. It is too much travelling already as it is."

The 54-year-old Russian pianist, who is known for his Romantic firebrand playing, will perform with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra on February 10, starring in Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No. 3*. This will be his third visit to Singapore in two years, following his SSO debut in 2005 and then in November last year with the St Petersburg Philharmonic.

### Russian dissident

Born in Moscow in 1952, Feltsman debuted with the Moscow Philharmonic at the age of 11. In 1971, he won the Grand Prix at the Marguerite Long International Piano Competition in Paris, leading to intensive tours in the former Soviet Union, Europe and Japan.

In 1979, because of his growing discontent with the official Soviet ideology and rigid governmental control of the arts, Feltsman applied for an exit visa. In response, he was immediately banned from performing in public. After eight years of virtual artistic exile, he was granted permission to leave the Soviet Union, and arrived in the United States in 1987. That same year, his Carnegie Hall debut established him as a major pianist on the American scene.

### Shostakovich, Mozart and others

His 2003 project, *Masterpieces of the Russian Underground*, unfolded a panorama of Russian contemporary music through the unprecedented survey of piano and chamber works of fourteen different composers from Shostakovich to the present day. It was presented by Lincoln Center

to great success. He elaborated, "I knew most of the 14 composers represented in the project personally and to bring their incredible works to the attention of American public was a great honour, a great challenge and a pleasure."

As his contribution to Mozart's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday last year, Feltsman commissioned keyboard builder Paul McNulty to construct a fortepiano modelled after an Anton Walter instrument from Mozart's time. And he used it to play all the Mozart sonatas in New York.

Also a trained conductor, Feltsman has been doing quite a bit of conducting these days. Just last month he conducted *Così Fan Tutte* in the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

### A distinguished career

Sharing the great tradition of piano playing, Feltsman holds the Distinguished Chair of Professor of Piano at the State University of New York, New Paltz and teaches at the Mannes College of Music in New York City. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the International Festival-Institute Piano Summer at New Paltz, a month-long training programme for advanced piano students from all over the world.

Feltsman's numerous recordings have been released on the Sony Classical, Music Heritage Society and Urtext labels, and Camerata Tokyo. He has recorded the clavier works of J. S. Bach, Beethoven's last five piano sonatas, the solo piano works of Schubert, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, and Messiaen, as well as the concerti by Bach, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Prokofiev.

For someone who has achieved much fame and recognition, one wondered whether he intended to cut back on the number of concerts to enjoy life. He says matter-of-factly, "Giving concerts and enjoying life does not contradict each other. You can do both." ■

Sat, 10 Feb 07  
 Esplanade Concert Hall  
**RACH III: VLADIMIR FELTSMAN**  
 Okko Kamu *conductor*  
 Vladimir Feltsman *piano*

CHERUBINI *Anacréon: Overture*  
 HAYDN *Symphony No. 92 in G major 'Oxford'*  
 RACHMANINOV *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30*



# Gerard Schwarz

## The Other SSO Across the Ocean

By Cindy Lim

When American conductor Gerard Schwarz first arrived at the Seattle Symphony in 1983, there were 5000 people subscribing to its concerts. Today, he is in his 22<sup>nd</sup> year as Music Director, and the orchestra boasts 40000 subscribers. Of the phenomenal growth, Schwarz attributed it largely to his orchestra's artistic growth, helped by the remarkable acoustics of Benaroya Hall, the orchestra's home.

He shared, "I believe that communities respond to an artistic comfort level, and I'd like to think our community – because I've been here so long – knows me and trusts me. We have integrated ourselves in every possible way into our broader community. As such, they have embraced us by coming to our concerts and supporting us. This trust is very fragile, and we all must continually analyse it and work hard to maintain it."

The 59-year-old maestro now spends half his time in Seattle, the place he calls home. "I have a great love of the city and for our orchestra. For me, of course, it's bringing great music to the wonderful audience of Seattle," said Schwarz.

### Reaching out

During his years in Seattle he has created numerous educational programmes for children and adults: Tiny Tots, Discover Music, Meet the Beat and Musically Speaking. He also expanded the subscription concerts, and added new series: New Music, Mozart, Baroque, and Light Classics. He created the following festivals: Pacific Rim, Viva La Musica, American Symphonists in 2005 and 2006, and The New European in 2007.

Schwarz explained that education is part of the process of developing the audience. "As an orchestra, we need to try to bring great classical music to 3-year-olds and 90-year-olds. What we try to do in Seattle is create a specific programme for each age group, and then in every possible way encourage that age group to become members of that audience. Accessibility is

extraordinarily important – if the programme is not reasonably priced and accessible to the audience, it will not be successful."

### From trumpet to baton

Born to Viennese parents, Schwarz is a graduate of the Juilliard School, and was a trumpet player in the New York Philharmonic. "Even though as a young man my dream was to play in the New York Philharmonic, once I attained that goal, I thought that I might be able to make some interpretations of the great masters on a larger scale that could be of some value in our world of music. Halfway through my tenure in New York, I began to change my musical focus, and as a result, started considering conducting for the first time," he explained.

"Conducting puts me in touch with the great composers, past and present. As a conductor, you almost feel like you're recreating that great music. In a way, without those of us who perform on the stage, that music really doesn't exist. There is nothing like "live" concerts. We are not like a museum – you can't come into our concert hall and see us or hear us without our participation."

### Posterity beckons

Off the stage, the family man enjoys spending time with his wife and children. "Beyond my family and music, I'm an avid reader. I'm interested in politics. I play tennis and ski," he enthused.

"I would love to be remembered as a man who knows right from wrong, and who goes down the right path at all times," he continued, "Someone who is generous, thoughtful, without any hostility or hatred toward anyone. Of course, to be remembered as a wonderful family man, and someone who has contributed significantly to musical life in the communities that I have served. Lastly, I want to be remembered as a great artist." ■



Thu, 15 Feb 07  
Esplanade Concert Hall  
ELGAR ANNIVERSARY:  
PERCHANCE TO DREAM  
Gerard Schwarz *conductor*  
Isabelle van Keulen *violin*

ELGAR *Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61*  
BRIGHT SHENG *China Dreams*  
STRAUSS *Der Rosenkavalier, Op. 59: Suite*



A luxury business hotel located within Singapore's liveliest commercial, entertainment and shopping belt. The luxurious guest and function rooms feature a wealth of services and facilities for the business and leisure traveller.

# Golf Tournament raises \$209,000 for SSO

A slight haze could not keep away 140 golfers from the 14<sup>th</sup> SSO Charity Golf Tournament on October 13 at the Sentosa Golf Club. Sponsored by Aberdeen Asset Management, the tournament raised \$209,000, which will be used to acquire quality string instruments for the orchestra.

Organised by the SSO Ladies' League, the committee was chaired by Ms Manju Vangal. Registration began at 10am, with golfers snapping up the mulligans and strings on sale. And for those who wanted to improve that swing, Thailand-based Pro Simon Yates was on hand to conduct a clinic. He demonstrated some fancy shots and gave valuable tips at the Driving Range.

After a lunch of chicken rice and free flowing beer, Guest-of-Honour Dr Lee Boon Yang, the Minister for Information, Communications & the Arts, led the tee-off with a shotgun start at Tanjong Course at 1.15pm. In the evening, fine Italian wines and canapés preceded a delightful Italian dinner. Dinner was accompanied by a lucky draw segment and entertainment by a quartet of SSO musicians.

Although no one managed to win the Hole-in-One prize, a Saab 9-3 convertible, Mr Ong Lay Ann emerged as the overall winner, taking home the top prize: a Chopard Mille Miglia Gran Turismo watch in steel. ■



Mrs Goh Chok Tong, Ms Manju Vangal, Mr & Mrs Lee Boon Yang and Mr Nicholas Hadow



Champion golfer Mr Ong Lay Ann receives his trophy and a Chopard Mille Miglia Gran Turismo watch from Dr Lee Boon Yang



Mr Robert s'jacob and Ms Dirie s'jacob



Ms Manju Vangal and Mrs Goh Chok Tong



Mrs Alice Lee and Mr Moses Lee



Dr Lee Boon Yang, Mr Nicholas Hadow, Mr Ng Kok Song and Mr Lance Tay



Mr David Chan, Mr Mervin Hoon and Mr Joseph Kwok

# Latin chic



*Mrs Odile Benjamin, Dr Della Lee, Mr Nestor Torres and Ms Mary Hoe Tan*



*Mr & Mrs Oral Dawe, Mrs Nancy Miller and Mr Douglas Miller*



*Mr & Mrs Clement Ng and Mr Jacomo Bairos*



*Mr Heinrich Grafe and Mr & Mrs Willi Hess*



*Dr & Mrs Mike Ghaemmaghami*



*Mr & Mrs Nash Benjamin*



*Mr & Mrs CT Lim*

SSO's first-ever Latin Pops Concert took place at the Victoria Concert Hall on October 28. Invited guests dressed in colourful chic warmed up quickly to the energetic performance starring the Grammy-winning flautist Nestor Torres from Puerto Rico. The SSO was conducted by its Principal Tubist Jacomo Bairos.

In celebration of friendship and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Conrad Centennial Singapore, Conrad and the SSO Ladies' League jointly hosted interval refreshments and a post-concert reception for corporate sponsors and partners. Under a colourful marquee set against the night sky, invited guests mingled over a spread of Puerto Rican food. Amongst the guests were Mr Douglas Benjamin and Mrs Odile Benjamin, Mr & Mrs Heinrich Grafe, Dr Della Lee, Mr & Mrs Choo Chiau Beng, Mr & Mrs Oral Dawe and Mr & Mrs Douglas Miller. ■



*Dr & Mrs Bernard Cheong*

# SSO Friend of the Quarter:

## Lim Woon Boon



### Love for art

As a child, her parents also took her to art exhibitions, instilling in her a love for art. So it is hardly surprising that in her career, Woon Boon joined the National University of Singapore Museum as events organiser before she was transferred to corporate relations in November last year.

Woon Boon and her girlfriend have held season tickets to SSO concerts since their secondary school days. "Both of us learnt piano and sang in the school choir. We had different tastes from the other girls in school," she shared. "We were such prudes as teenagers. And we actually have "younger" tastes now!"

### Autograph hunter

Back then there were no organised autograph sessions, so the two girls often sneaked backstage to ask for signatures. "I still have Stephen Hough's autograph when he was in Singapore in 1987. He was 26 and just starting out," she recounted.

"I had a cold and was feeling drowsy, but I can still remember Hough's precise interpretation of Saint-Saëns' *Piano Concerto No. 5*. It is a joy to see him mature into an even more accomplished musician. Very often it is not how brilliantly the musician has executed the piece of music, but how they relate to the audience through the music they play."

A mother of two lovable children, Zechariah, four, and Rebekah, eight, Woon Boon is also a self-professed Korean drama fanatic. Apart from classical concerts, she also enjoys musicals, dance and opera performances. She has watched *Les Misérables* three times - in Perth, Singapore and London.

### Favorites works

She is currently listening to Wang Jian's recording of the Bach *Cello Suites*. Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 4* is also one of her favourite pieces. "The second movement never fails to make my hair stand. I heard it for the first time when Du Ningwu played it with SSO in the mid-1980s. I recently

"googled" him and was glad to see that he is still active in the music scene. And has he matured!"

Woon Boon usually attends concerts alone or with friends. "My children are still too young to go with me and my husband falls asleep," she explained. "My daughter is taking piano lessons now, and she is using the piano my brothers and I once practised on."

### Part of the musical community

She had joined her husband on a posting to India and UK, and when she returned to Singapore in 1998, various commitments prevented her from attending concerts regularly. In 2004, when she took a break from work, she decided to renew her relationship with SSO by signing up as a Friend and volunteer. She says, "I enjoy discussing music with other volunteers and it's fun to be part of the music community." ■

### Early exposure

SSO Friend Lim Woon Boon has her late grandmother to thank for her love of music. "She was very musical," Woon Boon recalled. "She took care of me when I was little and would sing Malay songs and play the accordion while I listened. I never realised how remarkable she was until I was older. When she passed away, I kept her accordion as a memento."

And so Woon Boon started piano lessons when she was nine, all the way through junior college. Not many people know this, but she once toyed with the idea of making music her career. "I sent an audition tape to some school in the UK after my "A" Levels. I was accepted but chickened out in the end. I figured I lacked the discipline required to be a good musician," she sighed.



Woon Boon with her children in Hong Kong Disneyland

## Check out the 2007 privileges for SSO Friends at [www.sso.org.sg](http://www.sso.org.sg)!

From January 1 to February 28, all Friends of SSO enjoy a free glass of wine with every crepe ordered at Earshot, Esplanade Mall #01-01/03. Offer extended upon presentation of "Friends" card, and is not valid with set menus and other discounts & promotions.



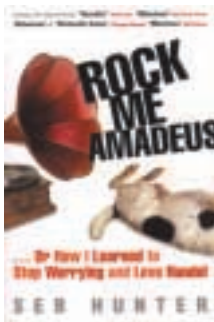
# BOOK REVIEW

## ROCK ME AMADEUS

Seb Hunter

Published by Penguin

\$37.75 at Books Kinokuniya



What happens when a self-professed hard rock junkie decides to embrace classical music? He goes on a physical and metaphorical journey in time and space, and the outcome is predictably funny. What made the classical composers tick? And why does classical music have its fair share of quirks and kooks, like the detestable Prommers or stiff-upper lip Mahlerites?

Taking a fast from pop music, his all-classical listening diet leads him to his new favourites: Bach, Schubert, Liszt, Bruckner, as well as blind spots: Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, much of opera and 20<sup>th</sup> century "serious" music. Immersing himself into a strange parallel world, he discovers that classical isn't too different from pop or rock.

Just mind the 4-letter word count, which piles up inexorably as he kills sacred cows with his initially refreshing (but increasingly tiresome) irreverence. A fun read for beginners (only if you're above 18) but a dedicated listener will soon outgrow its juvenile ranting and raving.

## WIN A \$30 KINOKUNIYA BOOK VOUCHER

BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. In which London venue are the BBC Proms held?
2. Pick the odd man out (Clue:Vienna)  
A. Mozart    B. Beethoven    C. Bruckner  
D. Brahms    E. Handel

Please send your answers and particulars to:

BraviSSimO! Kinokuniya Book Quiz  
Kinokuniya Bookstores of Singapore  
391B Orchard Road #13-06  
Ngee Ann City Tower B  
Singapore 238874  
Or email: Corp\_Affair@kinokuniya.co.jp

Closing date: 28 February 2007

The first correct entry drawn on 1 March 2007 will be notified accordingly.

The correct answers to last issue's quiz were:

1. Shostakovich's *Symphony No.7* is known as the Leningrad Symphony.
2. Shostakovich wrote 15 string quartets.



The winner was Soh Kok Leong.  
Congratulations!



# DVD REVIEW

## GAETANO DONIZETTI

### L'ELISIR D'AMORE

Wiener Staatsoper / ALFRED ESCHWÉ

Virgin Classics 00946 363352 9

Donizetti's popular comic opera of 1832, a simplistic but endearing tale of love potions and their consumers, gets a five-star treatment from two of opera's hottest names today. The chemistry between Anna Netrebko (Adina), a flighty rich man's daughter, and Rolando Villazón (Nemorino), the village simpleton, is immediately palpable, in a large part through their totally believable acting.



The supporting cast of Leo Nucci (Sergeant Belcore) and Ildebrando d'Arcangelo ("Doctor" Dulcamara) are up to their task, bringing the right mix of pomposity and wiliness in their roles respectively. The drama unfolds ever so readily in its two hours, culminating in Nemorino's great aria *Una furtiva lagrima*, so rapturously received that it is encored immediately.

All's well that ends well, and that also applies to this Wiener Staatsoper production that revels in its light-hearted touch, yet fizzles like champagne.

## WIN A COPY OF L'ELISIR D'AMORE

BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. TRUE or FALSE. The "elixir of love" was in effect a bottle of bordeaux.
2. TRUE or FALSE. Donizetti also composed *Le fille du régiment*.

Please send your answers and particulars to:

BraviSSimO! DVD Quiz  
EMI Singapore  
Blk 213 Henderson Road #04-05  
Singapore 159553  
Or email: lifang.law@emimusic.com

Closing date: 28 February 2007

The first correct entry drawn on 1 March 2007 will be notified accordingly.

The correct answers to last issue's quiz were:

1. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster took place in 1986, the year Valery Sokolov was born.
2. TRUE. Prokofiev was born in the Ukraine.



The winner was Daniel Lim Chee Kee.  
Congratulations!



# My Life Outside Music:

## Cindy Lee

Barring an allergy to shellfish, SSO violinist CINDY LEE manages to satisfy her curious taste buds by savouring safe foods, as CINDY LIM finds out.



Enjoying a bowl of noodles in Xian, China last year

### Foodie confidential

For someone who enjoys trying different cuisines wherever she is, it is an irony that violinist Cindy Lee is allergic to shellfish. That means shrimp, lobster and crab are a strict no-no. "My friends always joke that it costs next to nothing to buy me dinner because of my allergies to expensive foods!" she laughs.

However that does not prevent Cindy from trying the diverse cuisines and restaurants in Singapore, with minced pork noodles and frog porridge topping her list. "Maybe it's because of the similarities between Singaporean and Taiwanese minced pork noodles," she explains. "When I walk into a hawker centre, there is a 80% chance that I would have that for dinner. I also like to go to Geylang Lorong 3 for frog porridge when my friends are enjoying their chilli crab nearby."

When Cindy is not busy practising, she will be found her in the kitchen, or simply catching a movie in the theatre.

"There are many cookbooks of various cuisines on my bookshelves," she says. "I find it a lot of fun mixing different ingredients and cooking them in different ways."

She also admits to really enjoying the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*. "It was very funny," she adds, "I loved the pretty clothes and handbags. I had the urge to go shopping right after watching that!"

### Memories of Taiwan

Born in Taipei and raised in Kaohsiung as a "city kid", Cindy thinks her childhood to be probably similar to kids in Singapore. "During holidays I would ask my parents to take me to the countryside to visit my grandparents," she reminisces.

Cindy remembers her father waking her every morning with the music of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* played on his old LP record player. She started her piano lessons when she was four, and as a child she tried to replicate the violin solo of *Four Seasons* on the piano. She had her first public piano performance in a local competition when she was seven, beating older contestants to win the first prize.

Cindy started violin studies at eight under a special artistic programme in a local elementary school. "In the beginning, I didn't spend much time on the violin because I thought the instrument was very difficult to play and I got more satisfaction playing the piano," she shares. "But in high school, I took my violin teacher's suggestion to do a double major in both piano and violin performance."

"I have been focusing on both instruments since then. When I was in the United States, I was still playing piano and accompanying occasionally. I'm really grateful that I can play both so I can always switch to the other if I ever feel tired of one."

### Aqua Girl

Cindy has been playing in the SSO for two years. Prior to Singapore, Cindy lived in USA for about five years. "It was a bit of a struggle adjusting to the high humidity and temperature initially. Now, I've adapted quite nicely but you will still find me wearing sleeveless tops most of the time."

Not that she's complaining. She relishes the fact that she can go to "almost anywhere in the country" in under 30 minutes. Although she is hoping there would be more convenient stores here, "You can find them on every street corner in Taiwan!"

To beat the heat, Cindy has taken to a new form of cool exercise: aqua exercise in her condominium pool. "It's fun but tiring. I get to exercise the muscles I seldom use. I absolutely love it!" ■



After a badminton match: Cindy (left) with colleagues Wu Man Yan and Nikolai Koval

## ROMANCE DE AMOR

XUE FEI YANG, Guitar

EMI Classics 370714 2 / Full-price / TT: 77 min



This is a debut recording for the Chinese guitarist who so impressed John Williams that he presented her with his Greg Smallman guitar as a gift. An anthology with a "Greatest Hits" feel, it showcases popular short works for guitar, including the titular work, Myers' *Cavatina* (from *The Deer Hunter*), Tarrega's *Memories of the Alhambra*, Albeniz's *Asturias* and other Latin favourites. There's also an Oriental touch with hits tunes from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Toru Takemitsu's transcription of the Beatles' number *Michelle*. Enthusiastically recommended.

## HOLST The Planets

MATTHEWS Pluto – The Renewer

World Premiere of The Asteroids

Berlin Philharmonic / SIR SIMON RATTLE

EMI Classics 369690 2 (2CDs)

Full-price / TT: 1 hr 35 min



The seven *Planets* of Gustav Holst receive as fine a recording as would be expected from Germany's top band and Britain's brightest conductor. Added interest takes the form of Colin Matthews' atmospheric "completion" with *Pluto - The Renewer* (a third recording, before it was "de-planetised") and the Asteroids Project. Four contemporary composers Kaija Saariaho (Finland), Matthias Pintscher (Germany), Mark-Anthony Turnage (UK) and Brett Dean (Australia) had been commissioned to write a short orchestral work each on a celestial theme. The works, ranging from 5 to 8 minutes, demonstrate a small cross-section of modern composition today and are worth an attentive and critical listen.

## CAPRICE

ALISON BALSOM, Trumpet

Gothenburg Symphony / EDWARD GARDNER

EMI Classics 353255 2 / Full-price / TT: 60 min



Flair and exuberance may be used to describe the trumpet playing of young Brit Alison Balsom. This selection comprises mostly short pieces of a virtuosic kind (including Paganini's *Caprice No.24* transcribed), those requiring extreme *legato* and delicate breath control (Oskar Lindberg's *Andante* and Rachmaninov's *Vocalise*) and movements from concertos (by Bach and Tomasi). The rarity takes the form of Luciano Berio's orchestration of Falla's *Popular Spanish Songs*, which receives winning performances as with much of this highly enjoyable disc.

## ANGEL DANCES

12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic

EMI Classics 357030 2 / Full-price / TT: 74 min



There is a spiritual element in this album that unites the music of Carissimi, Bach, Mendelssohn, Verdi, Debussy, Astor Piazzolla, Arvo Pärt and contemporary German composers Volker Schlott and Markus Stockhausen. Even if the periods and styles clash headlong, the famed 12 cellists from Berlin deliver with a slickness that is both persuasive and beguiling. Jocelyn Smith's vocals in disparate genres (modern spiritual and baroque opera) sometimes come across as jarring but is well within the all-encompassing scope of this unusual and intriguing selection.

## HORIZONS

LEIF OVE ANDSNES, Piano

EMI Classics 341682 2 / Full-price / TT: 69 min



Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andnes shows he has wide-ranging and catholic tastes in his choice of encores. These include audience favourites (Debussy's *Clair de lune*, Liszt's *Liebestraum No.3* and Chopin staples), and obvious rarities by the likes of Antheil, Mompou, Smetana, Charles Trenet and Cyril Scott (the Oriental perfumed *Lotus Land*), all of which performed with great zest and feeling. The pick of the crop comprises works by fellow Scandinavians - Grieg, Halvorsen and Sibelius. Just 22 perfect ways to end a piano recital!

### WIN A COPY OF ROMANCE DE AMOR

BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. TRUE OR FALSE. Francisco Tarrega composed *Romance de Amor*.
2. TRUE OR FALSE. Xue Fei Yang is the first Chinese guitarist to have an exclusive contract with a major recording label.

Please send your answers and particulars to:

BraviSSimO! EMI Quiz  
EMI Singapore  
Blk 213 Henderson Road #04-05  
Singapore 159553  
or email: lifang.law@emimusic.com

Closing date: 28 February 2007

The first 5 correct answers to be drawn on 1 March will be notified accordingly.

The answers to last issue's quiz were:

1. William Lloyd Webber was the father of Julian and Andrew.
2. TRUE. Julian Lloyd Webber performed with the SSO in the 1986 Singapore Arts Festival.

The winners were Josephine Loo, Tan Sik Kim, Hermond Leong, Katherine Cheng Lih Chin and Soong Sheng Tee. Congratulations!

# Lisztomania: The Art of Virtuosity

## Singapore International Piano Festival

28 June – 1 July 2007, Victoria Concert Hall

This year's PianoFest has its focus on one of the Romantic era's greatest names – Franz Liszt (1811-1886). The Hungarian-born pianist composer invented the piano recital, and turning his sleek and handsome side profile towards his audience while performing, sent his legions of fans into rapture. Women swooned, men left dumbfounded and there was a frenzy for his memorabilia – a lock of hair, a perfumed handkerchief, anything part of Liszt would do. In short, he was the world's first pop idol!

Yet there is much beyond the superficial aspects of Liszt's flashy and highly virtuosic playing and numerous nigh-unplayable compositions. Was he a true genius or a shameless charlatan? Was he a visionary or merely a recycler of others' music? Was he a sinner or a saint? Some critics regard him as the most important 19<sup>th</sup> century composer, providing an inseparable link into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Others dismiss him as a consummate showman and prolific but empty note-spinner. No other composer has provoked such diverse and diametrically opposite responses.

This edition of PianoFest attempts to showcase Liszt's multi-faceted personality, with a tantalising and varied selection of Liszt's wide-ranging piano music: from the "simple" to the most technically challenging, from simple-minded to complex, from popular to arcane, and including rarely played works from his later years. Some works to be performed include:

- Sonata in B minor
- Concerto Pathétique (for two pianos)  
**SINGAPORE PREMIERE**
- Six Consolations
- Benediction de Dieu dans la solitude  
**SINGAPORE PREMIERE**
- Reminiscences de Don Juan
- Liebestraum No. 3
- Hungarian Rhapsody No. 4  
**SINGAPORE PREMIERE**
- Trauervorspiel und Trauermarsch  
**SINGAPORE PREMIERE**
- Csardas obstine **SINGAPORE PREMIERE**

and transcriptions of music by Rossini, Schubert, Wagner and Tchaikovsky.



That's not all. The legacy of Liszt was to influence an entire generation of composers and performers, with many later works written and performed in the Lisztian mould, reflecting his virtuosity and even spirituality. Other composers to be featured in this year's PianoFest include Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Moscheles, Bruch, Halevy, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Balakirev, Bernstein, Lyssenko, Kapustin, and local composers Joyce Koh and Zechariah Goh. ■



David Nettle & Richard Markham



Cyprien Katsari



Albert Lin



Minoru Nojima



Valentina Lisitsa

The pianists for PianoFest 2007 are:

- 28 June **DAVID NETTLE & RICHARD MARKHAM (UK)**
- 29 June **CYPRIEN KATSARIS (Cyprus / France)**
- 30 June **ALBERT LIN (Singapore), 4pm**
- 30 June **MINORU NOJIMA (Japan)**
- 1 July **VALENTINA LISITSA (Ukraine)**

All recitals at Victoria Concert Hall commence at 8 pm unless otherwise stated.