

Not-the-L8Nite Performance

**Chinese Whispers:
An Understanding of 'Neo-Chinoiserie' in Contemporary Piano Compositions from the
West**

Since the twentieth century, composers have challenged themselves by intermixing cultural elements of conflicting values in their compositions. Although in recent years, scholars have investigated the cross-culture influences in the piano repertoire by Chinese composers, (Dai, 2008), there is still little understanding of how Western composers use the 'Neo-Chinoiserie' differently and study the cultural influences on piano playing.

This presentation uses two contrasting examples to address the relationship between cultural elements and piano performing practice. One focuses on Chinese philosophical influences: two selected pieces from *A Pianist's I Ching* by British composer Geoffrey Poole who was inspired by the thoughts from Chinese philosophy the *I Ching*; the other on exploring the sound of Chinese qin instrument on pieces from *Five Melodies* by New Zealand composer Jack Body.

The presentation will provide a snapshot of the autoethnographic approach which brings new insights into the learning process and emphasises the essence of *I Ching's* influences on Poole's compositions. By analysing my own reflections based on reading the *I Ching*, which transformed the ancient wisdom texts into a mentor who guided me to build my own interpretation of Poole's pieces. In addition, I will demonstrate the qin's choreography influences on playing Body's piano compositions which provide more possibilities in exploring sound effects inside the piano.

Furthermore, I will conclude with a performance of two selected pieces from *A Pianist's I Ching* and two movements from *Five Melodies* to show how they break the presumptions about Chinese cultural influences in the West and embody the discoveries gained through this research. Since there is not much literature on understanding 'Neo-chinoiserie' piano composition and the performance practice on this repertory, it makes this research more important to explore these hidden gems on how one's cultural background can be the most effective performance technique for conveying emotions to build a unique interpretation of cross-cultural repertoire.

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She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Music at Guildhall School of Music and Drama under the guidance of Professor Joan Havill, Dr. Alexander Soares and Rolf Hind. As a practitioner, Ke presented her research project at the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and Royal Musical Association Research Students' Conference in 2023 themed 'Borderlands' at Northumbria University.

As a pianist, Ke has achieved top prizes at international competitions, including 1st Prize at the 2016 Concours International de la vie de Maisons-Laffitte and Karoly Mocsari Special Prize (France); 1st Prize at the 2014 Shenzhen Competition (China); and 3rd Prize at the 2012 Ettlingen Competition (Germany). She made her debut at Wigmore Hall under the auspices of the Kirckman Concert Society and has performed in concerts across the UK, Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Hungary and the US.

