

Dr. Abigail Sin Si Ern

Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (Singapore)

Biography

Singaporean pianist Abigail Sin's musical journey has taken her to concert venues across the globe, from the Aram Khachaturian concert hall in Yerevan to Wigmore Hall in London. A top prize winner of several international piano competitions, she is an alumnus of the Verbier Festival Academy and a Young Steinway Artist. She is a keen chamber musician and has performed alongside faculty artists at the Yellow Barn Festival and the Four Seasons Winter Workshop in the USA. Abigail is the co-founder of the More Than Music chamber music concert series in Singapore.

Abigail studied with Dr Thomas Hecht at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music and with Joan Havill at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she won the Ivan Sutton Chamber Music Award. She recently completed a PhD at the Royal Academy of Music where she studied with Christopher Elton. Her doctoral studies were supported by the prestigious Lee Kuan Yew Scholarship. In July 2018, Abigail joined the academic faculty of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

Topic Presented

Technique and the Artistic Image in Dialogue: Exploring Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*

Abstract

In *The Art of Piano Playing*, the great pedagogue Heinrich Neuhaus introduced the concept of an "Artistic Image" that a pianist constructs in her imagination. The Artistic Image refers to how a pianist views the musical content of a piece, which governs her decisions at the instrument as the Artistic Image is embodied in sound in performance. For Neuhaus, the clearer the goal (i.e. the Artistic Image), the clearer the means of attaining it (i.e. piano technique). However, he intriguingly nuanced his view with the idea that one's technique could also shape one's artistic image in the long run.

In this lecture recital, I explore Neuhaus's idea of how one's personal relationship with the piano can dialogue with the way one views a score, thereby shaping one's Artistic Image. I will demonstrate that a pianist's physical, visceral relationship with sound colour and sound production can be a means for perceiving and defining musical structures, and navigating their implications for performance. I will be using Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* as a case study, drawing on Ravel's orchestration as well as the solo piano version to articulate and qualify issues of sound production and musical structures.

I believe that this approach liberates pianists to treat sound production and structure as equal partners in constructing one's interpretation, rather than separate non-related issues. This could be a useful example for how we might find ways to communicate clearly about sound production and structure to our students, and also to enrich our own practice.