



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Minjoo Kim, Composition

DMA Recital Year 3

Thursday, March 6th, 2025 at 7:30 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

Toccatina (2024) Yu-Cheng Chang, Marimba

Rainy Night City (2024) Yu-Cheng Chang, Marimba
Hoi Tong Keung, Vibraphone

Lux Aeterna (2024) Pre-recorded Video
Danial Sheibani Conductor, Veronica Zupanic Violin I, Patrick Wu Violin II
Grace Kyungrok Moon Viola, Chloe Liang Cello, Alannah Beauparlant Soprano

A Disconnected Tune (2022) Elianna Van Raalte, Violin
Samantha Yang, Cello
Xuan He, Piano
Matthieu Savard, Double Bass
Peter Min, Conductor

INTERMISSION

Two Scenes (2024) Veronica Zupanic, Violin
I. Con Passione
II. Tarantella
Hye Won Cecilia Lee, Piano

Swing Hosanna (2025) Pre-recorded Video
MacMillan Singers, Dr. Jamie Hillman Conductor, Dr. Joy Lee Piano

Starburst Capriccio (2023) Elianna Van Raalte, Violin
I. Streaking Starburst
II. My Heart's Refuge
III. Cassiopeia's Chair
Samantha Yang, Cello
Xuan He, Piano

Partita Rococo (2023) Eugene Jung, Clarinet I
Yen Han Chen, Clarinet II
I. Grotesque March
II. Corellianic Chasing
III. Notturmo
IV. A Break Valse
V. Ridiculous Exit
Adella Li, Piano
Hoi Tong Keung, Xylophone & Marimba

This recital is in partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition Degree.
Minjoo Kim is a student of Norbert Palej.



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Minjoo Kim, a South Korean composer currently based in Toronto and New York, has had her works performed at various concerts and events. Most recently, her choral piece 'Swing Hosanna' commissioned by the MacMillan Singers, was performed in February 2025 at the CoCA Popups Concert, hosted by CoSA Canada. The MacMillan Singers previously premiered the piece at the Cornell University Chorale Toronto Concert. In 2024, Kim's piano trio piece 'Starburst Capriccio' was premiered at the Asian Classical Music Initiative Conference in Los Angeles. In 2022, Kim was also awarded 'The Martinu Composition Prize' at Mannes School of Music. Her orchestral piece 'A Brutal Music Box' was premiered in New York City by the Mannes Orchestra in 2023.

Kim's international debut was held in February 2020, where she was commissioned by the Mannes Sounds Festival to premiere her solo piano piece. This event was held in honor of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth at the German Consulate General in NYC. Kim strives to emphasize the interplay between elements of traditional Korean music and contemporary Western music through her compositions.

Throughout her career, Kim contributed to the fields of piano performance and composition in Korea and the United States. She completed her Master of Music and Professional Studies Diploma in Composition at Mannes School of Music under the guidance of David T. Little. Kim is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Composition at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music under Norbert Palej. At the University of Toronto, she teaches the course "Music Skills III" and works as the Composer in Residence of the MacMillan Singers.

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

PROGRAM NOTES

<PARTITA ROCOCO> for 2 clarinets, percussion, and piano

Partita Rococo, composed between 2022 and 2023, consists of five movements. Each movement focuses on one or two simple ideas, presented intensively, and drawing inspiration from the bagatelle tradition in 18th-century music. There is no continuous narrative; instead, the work maintains an atmosphere of the "ridiculous," "humorous," and "scathing satire." In a single word, it could be described as "grotesque." The artistic approach of this piece aligns with the intuitive simplicity of the Rococo style.

The first movement, Grotesque March, portrays a king's absurd stride. Although everyone knows he is a fool, the king himself remains oblivious. The second movement, Corellianic Chasing, depicts two clarinets pursuing each other in quasi-imitative counterpoint. Marimba and piano collaborate independently of the clarinets, echoing Corelli's Christmas Concerto, Op. 6, No. 8. In the third movement, Notturmo, tranquility dominates. This section captures a moment of deep, expressive atmosphere. The fourth movement, A Bleak Valse, reflects the king's unstable and gloomy psychological state, conveyed through a waltz rhythm. Finally, the longest movement, Ridiculous Exit, illustrates the king's laughable, stumbling departure. This movement explores two main ideas: the anxious rush as he exits and his comically waddling retreat. The king's downfall is inevitable—his fall has no wings.

<LUX AETERNA> for soprano and string quartet

The theme of *Lux Aeterna*, symbolizing the light of God and a human soul finding eternal rest, has inspired many musical compositions. As a composer, I poured my heart into creating music amidst a forest of immortal words and masterpieces. In my work, *Lux Aeterna* for Soprano and String Quartet, I employed two main musical elements. The first is the sacred chords of light, played by the string ensemble, which evoke an eternal and divine atmosphere. The second element is a traditional Korean folk song sung by children, chosen for its pure and innocent narrative of eternal light and the human soul.

This inspiration came from reading *Le Secret de Maximilien Kolbe* by Maria Winowska, which portrays the life of Father Kolbe, who selflessly sacrificed himself for others in Auschwitz during the Nazi regime. Through this book, I was deeply moved by the idea that altruistic sacrifice and love can become immortal and serve as a light in the world. My *Lux Aeterna* is a requiem dedicated to Father Kolbe, the saint.

<STARBURST CAPRICCIO> for violin, violoncello, and piano

Have you ever seen a flock of shooting stars? They provide a breathtaking display of brilliant lights, their tails intertwining in a spectacle of luminous beauty. Stars hold different cultural meanings across the world, but in Korea, they often symbolize a sense of home. They pose both questions and answers about human origins. I grew up with this understanding of the night sky through the fairy tales of my childhood. Stars also evoke a sense of loneliness and yearning. The feeling of longing I experienced during my prolonged time away from home was heightened by gazing at the stars of a foreign land, ultimately inspiring the composition of this piece.

One specific, unforgettable moment inspired me the most. Last summer, while on a beach in Kenting, Taiwan, I witnessed a meteor shower that resembled streams of stars descending in luminous whirls. Surprisingly, it was there that I felt most acutely reminded of my homeland. The first movement of this trio attempts to convey this sensation. The second movement serves as a deeply personal, nostalgic lament for my hometown. The initial theme, introduced by the piano and later transformed by the violin and cello with relatively free rhythm, dominates the entire movement. It rarely ventures beyond a narrow pitch range, giving the movement a strong *mono-thematic* character. Variations on this theme flow freely, ultimately leading into the third movement *attacca*.

One particular constellation, Cassiopeia's Chair, holds special significance for me. It is visible year-round in my hometown and is particularly prominent in the autumn. As is widely known, this constellation forms a "W" shape and, along with the Big Dipper, serves as an important guide to locating the North Star. The third movement of my composition represents this constellation. The cello introduces the first section with tetrachords that trace the shape of Cassiopeia's stars (e.g., E4–F#3–B4–G#3). The gentle interplay of sounds between the violin and piano, which accompany the cello's notes, mirrors the sparkling lights surrounding Cassiopeia in the night sky. This entire movement is based on "Cassiopeia-tetrachords." Even the final chord is constructed using these four notes.

<TWO SCENES> for violin and piano

The first movement of *Two Scenes* for violin and piano, titled *Con Passione*, was composed with the deliberate intention of breaking away from traditional narrative structures. In contrast to the conventional approach, where a motif undergoes various stages of development to build up to a climax, this piece uses a series of musical mobiles layered to form the movement. Central to the composition are the suspensions introduced in the first four measures. Their swift resolutions evoke a sense of instability in the linear progression. The piece roughly follows a rondo form in its overall structure.

The second movement of *Two Scenes* draws inspiration from the tarantella dance, reflected in its lively and agile passages. Following an arch form (seven sections) with an introduction and coda, the central notes of each section are introduced in the left hand during measures 9–11 of the introduction (C#–Eb–Bb–Ab–Bb–C–D). The piece opens with an Impressionistic, "dreamy" style, characterized by a spirited interchange of music between the violin and piano. The middle section, C–D–C', transitions into a more introspective and emotional state, offering a contrast to the overall character of the piece. Subsequent sections, B' and A', echo themes previously heard, providing a sense of closure and unity.

<TOCCATINA> for marimba solo

This piece, titled *Toccatina (Little Toccatina)*, features a prominent motif based on the first four-note tetrachord (A–B–E–D#), which recurs throughout the work. A consistent rhythmic pattern is maintained from start to finish, with a brief musical interlude in the middle section that introduces a chorale. Following the chorale passage, a tranquil section subtly reintroduces the initial motif before transitioning back to a passage reminiscent of the piece's beginning.

<SWING HOSANNA> for mixed choir

Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus
Hosanna in excelsis Hosanna in excelsis
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis
Hosanna in excelsis in excelsis

Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna in excelsis Hosanna in excelsis Deus

Hosanna in excelsis Hosanna in excelsis Deus
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo

Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth

Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in excelsis Deo
Deo Deo Deo Deo Deo Deo Deo Deo
Hosanna Hosanna A men.

"Hosanna" is an iconic and essential text in church music, inspiring countless choral works. My composition, *Swing Hosanna*, seeks to blend this tradition with a modern sensibility. The piece features elements of traditional Korean music, keeping these influences subtle while embracing the essence of Western jazz swing. The melody is particularly influenced by the traditional Korean "boat song" (*barcarolle*), characterized by its distinctive leaps of a perfect fourth. Additionally, I incorporated features of Latin church music by employing simple, repetitive lyrics to enhance musical focus. This approach was inspired by the Renaissance style known as *stile alla Palestrina* ("in the style of Palestrina").

Swing Hosanna is part of the Composer-in-Residence program with the MacMillan Singers at the University of Toronto and premiered under the direction of Dr. Jamie Hillman.

<RAINY NIGHT CITY> for marimba and vibraphone

The piece *Rainy Night City* for marimba and vibraphone captures universal emotions: a rainy night viewed through a café window, the glow of streetlamps and passing cars, and the feelings of solitude and longing experienced by someone far from home.

The greatest challenge in composing this piece was harmonizing the percussive sound of the marimba with the metallic resonance of the vibraphone. However, the subtle timbres of these percussion instruments effectively convey the eerie and unfamiliar atmosphere of the urban landscape, along with the sense of solitude felt by someone who is both connected to and detached from their surroundings.

The overall structure features a theme introduced at the beginning, which serves as the piece's focal point and is explored through a rondo form. Even the contrasting sections borrow musical material from the initial theme, ensuring that a singular, unifying force holds the piece together.

<A DISCONNECTED TUNE> for violin, violoncello, contrabass, and piano

The title of this piece, *A Disconnected Tune*, draws inspiration from Luigi Nono's 1956 work, *Il Canto Sospeso (A Suspended Song)*. While Nono uses his music to convey the brutality of fascism and issue a warning, my piece expresses a deeply personal experience centered on the theme of "memory." Here, the term "tune" symbolizes specific incidents imprinted in my memory as I have matured, rather than simply referring to a short song or melody.

Among these memories are moments that remain vividly clear, as well as experiences whose realities are less distinct—submerged beneath the surface of my consciousness. These recollections have never truly been "suspended" in my personal history; instead, they persist, often bringing discomfort and sometimes manifesting as nightmares.

A Disconnected Tune musically portrays these personal and psychological experiences, illustrating the conflicts between unclear events and imprecise memories. The choice to use two low-string instruments in the quartet is deliberate, symbolizing the psychological instability described. Additionally, the frequent breaks between musical passages emphasize this sense of disconnection, mirroring the fragmented nature of these memories.
