

CONCERTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY

AUTUMN—WINTER 2014

Tuesday 18 November 2014
1.10pm
Reid Concert Hall

Rohan De Saram · cello
Tanya Ekanayaka · piano

Programme of works by **TOVEY, TANYA EKANAYAKA/
ROHAN DE SARAM and JOHN MAYER.**



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Elegiac Variations for cello and piano Op. 25

Donald Francis Tovey (1875-1940)

The Elegiac Variations were written in 1909 in memory of Robert Hausmann (the cellist of the Joachim Quartet and a friend of both Brahms and Tovey). Casals and Tovey performed it together in that year. It's a richly expressive 10-minute work that builds to an impassioned and sustained climax before subsiding.

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Nim-Him & Haar (World Premiere)

Tanya Ekanayaka and Rohan de Saram

Nim-Him & Haar includes two movements for solo piano and semi-improvised solo cello composed by Tanya Ekanayaka and Rohan de Saram respectively. Representative of a veritable conversation between the two instruments and also reflective of each artist's deeply personal musical identities, the guiding link between the two movements is that they each draw on a well-known contemporary Sri Lankan semi-classical song named *Nim Him Sewwa* by Pundit W. D. Amaradeva.

Movement 1 for solo piano – This movement incorporates a blend of variations on the Sri Lankan popular song Nim Him Sewwa with a motif inspired by the tonal centres of the eight movements comprising John Mayer's *Prabhanda* and the tonal center of Donald Francis Tovey's *Elegiac Variations*, the two other works performed in this concert. Some of the movements in *Prabhanda* do not contain an obvious tonal centre and in these instances the note that seems most prominent and which could be seen to allude to a tonal centre was selected to represent the movement. The varying moods of the movement are also intended to be evocative of my experience of Scottish mists often called haar. This movement evolved as a whole in Edinburgh in 2014 while I was at the piano and also features within my much longer work '2013/14 June Echoes' which is the final work of my debut album of solo piano works performed by me.

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Movement 2 for solo cello - Using some of the melodic material used by Tanya in her composition, my improvisation will have characteristics of Sri Lankan folk music and the use of natural harmonics, including the 7th, 11th and 13th which do not form part of the Western tempered tuning. I will also use some drum rhythms played on the body of the cello together with the Indian raga Todi, and some material from Buddhist chants.

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Prabhanda

John Mayer (1930-2004)

Prabhanda is an ancient Indian word used for a group of pieces, similar in a way to the Western 'suite'. The composition consists of eight pieces for cello and piano and draws largely from the techniques of the ragas and talas of India. Prabhanda was written in 1982 for the duo Rohan and Druvi de Saram.

1. Ampari-Kirtan: Ampari is a district of Bandaradaira in Sri Lanka where most melodies cover a scale of six notes, which means it is non-Buddhistic, since Buddhist chants have a range of only five notes. Kirtan is a devotional song of Bengal.
2. Alaap: This movement, which follows the previous one without a break, is the introductory slow movement of a raga composition.
3. Tihai: Tihai is a short melodic and rhythmic phrase, which is played in unison. This means the melodic line is echoed by parallel rhythm and this is played three times.
4. Alaap two
5. Jhalla: This is the third section of a raga composition. It is in this movement that an element of pulse is introduced. The main feature is the repetition of the tonic note after every melody note is played.
6. Kirtan two
7. Ragatal: Raga (scale) and Tal (rhythm) are two of the main features of Indian music and in this movement the melodic and rhythmic elements are used in the form of tans (variations).
8. Gat: This is the final section in a raga composition with well-defined rhythmic patterns set on a particular tal (rhythm) which in this piece consists of fifteen beats.

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Rohan de Saram is one of the world's most distinguished cellists, master of classical and modern music. A child prodigy aged eleven, he studied with Gaspar Cassado in Italy. Winner of the Suggia Award he went on to study with Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico and Sir John Barbirolli in London. Casals said of Rohan: "There are few of his generation that have such gifts." Many composers have written for him including Iannis Xenakis, Henri Pousseur and Luciano Berio. Berio composed his final Sequenza XIV for him and wrote of him: ".....your sound, your perfect intonation, your phrasing and bowing technique make you a great performer of any music."

For many years Rohan was cellist of the Arditti Quartet, for whom hundreds of new works were written and by whom hundreds of world premieres were given and many recordings made. Whilst with the Arditti Quartet, they were awarded the

Siemens prize for their services to music and a Grammy Award for their recording of works by Elliott Carter, including his Sonata for cello and piano and his work 'Figment' for solo cello.

At the end of November 2005, Rohan left the Arditti Quartet in order to work with other artists, composers and friends around the world, bringing together music from a range of musical periods, both eastern and western, classical and contemporary, composed and improvised. In December 2004, Rohan was awarded an honorary D. Litt. from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, and in December 2005, he was awarded the Deshamaniya, the national honour of Sri Lanka.

His recently published book "Conversations" between Rohan and Joachim Steinheuer from Heidelberg University, has been described as "a treasure trove of musical jewels" and is available from the German publisher, wolke@wolke-verlag.de. Rohan will talk about his book and about his life, views on contemporary music including improvisation and experiences working with some of the greatest classical musicians of the 20th century, on Wednesday 19 November at 12 noon in Alison House, lecture room A, 12 Nicolson Square. All welcome.

website: www.rohandesaram.co.uk

Tanya Ekanayaka is one of Sri Lanka's foremost, internationally acclaimed and award winning concert pianist-composers. Classically trained and with a background in Asian and popular music, she is also a musicologist and linguist. Tanya began studying the piano when she was just five years old, made her debut public recital appearance at the age of twelve and has since given solo recitals at some of the world's most prestigious concert venues. Her United States debut was a solo recital to a capacity audience at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC in 2012 where her recital incorporated the world premiere of two of her own compositions. Consistent with her interdisciplinary background, Tanya holds a doctorate for interdisciplinary research involving the disciplines of Linguistics and Musicology from Edinburgh University as well as a range of degrees in Music Performance, Linguistics and Literature.

Tanya's recitals are distinguished by the incorporation of her own compositions representing a novel musical genre involving the blend of ancient and popular Sri Lankan musics, with musical motifs inspired by the other works that form a given recital programme she is performing. Her compositions evolve spontaneously and often as a whole when she is at the piano.

Tanya has been on the teaching faculty of Edinburgh University since 2007 where she has taught part-time in its departments of Linguistics and Music. In 2014, Tanya signed a contract with the world's second largest classical music record label which will be launching globally Tanya's maiden album of her compositions for solo piano performed by her and representing her unique genre. Tanya's album represents the first album of compositions entirely by a Sri Lankan composer to ever be launched globally by a leading international record label.

website: <http://www.tanyaekanayaka.com/>