



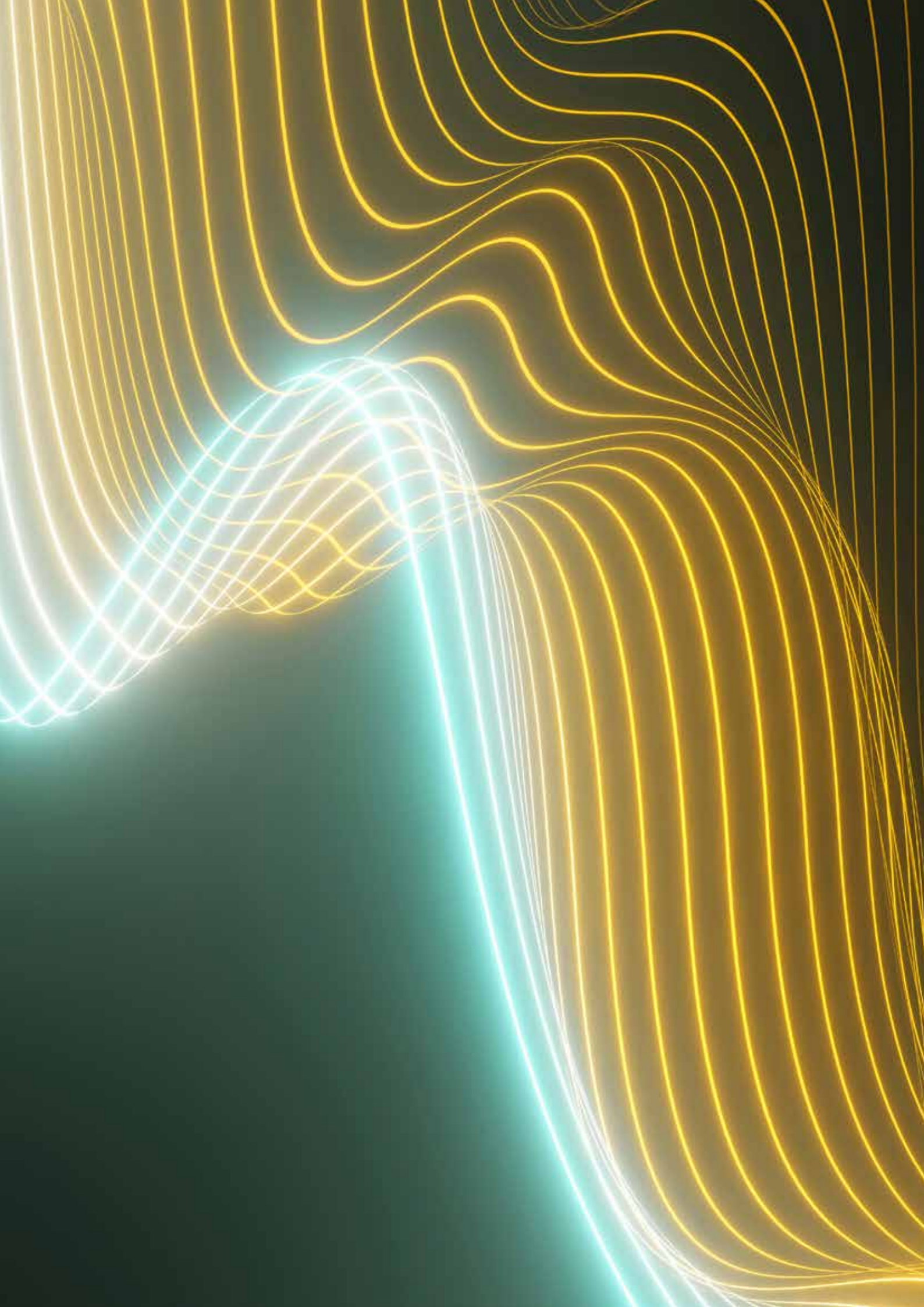
EAST MEETS WEST

18 OCTOBER 2025

ODEION

FREE STATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

the celebration continues



EAST MEETS WEST

CONDUCTOR: HO CHUNG YEH
SOLOISTS: HUI CHIU CHINESE BAMBOO FLUTES
HANDRI LOOTS FLUTE

PROGRAMME:
MOZART: OVERTURE TO THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO
WANG CHENWEI: THAIPUSAM (AFRICAN PREMIERE)
TANG JIANPING: FLYING SONG (AFRICAN PREMIERE)
WANG CHENWEI: WINDS OF AFFINITY (AFRICAN PREMIERE)

- INTERVAL -

SCHUMANN: SYMPHONY NO. 2

18 OCTOBER 2025
ODEION

FREE STATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
the celebration continues

PROGRAMME

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756 - 1791

OVERTURE TO LE NOZZE DI FIGARO ('THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO'), KV 492 (1786)

Mozart's comedy contains some of the finest music ever composed. His collaborator Lorenzo da Ponte based his libretto on a 1784 play by Pierre Beaumarchais (a sequel to *The Barber of Seville*). The choice of subject matter was a bold one, as the play had been banned in Vienna, its portrayals of class conflict considered a provocation. (We should remember that the French Revolution was not far away.) In the end, da Ponte appealed successfully to have his libretto accepted by the authorities, having softened much of Beaumarchais' political rhetoric with an atmosphere of frothy comedy.

Nevertheless, the central topic of the opera remained a serious one for the time. The philandering Count Almaviva attempts to postpone the wedding of his servant Figaro in order to seduce his fiancée Susanna before the ceremony. As the pair thwart his every move, the Count resorts to marrying Figaro off to his retired housekeeper, to whom Figaro owes a sum of money. Susanna hears of this and is about to pay the debt herself, when it is revealed that the old woman is Figaro's mother. The Count's scheming is ultimately exposed in full view of his household, and he seeks pardon from Figaro, Susanna, as well as his neglected wife, the Countess Rosina.

The famous overture is a brief and amusing affair, its harmonic simplicity undermined by irregular phrase lengths and unexpected accents. The juxtaposition of two hilariously incongruous themes makes this the perfect curtain raiser for the opera, in which intrigues, secret letters, disguises and mistaken identities are central to the complicated plot. The opening motive suggests the scurrying about of the servants, attempting to evade and outwit their pompous master. The Count is portrayed by a regal sounding theme with fanfares, but even here the phrases are short by two bars, suggesting that the glory days of this buffoon are long gone. Indeed, the scampering little theme gains in prominence, and seems to take over the Count's music by the end of the overture. In terms of pure music, it is delightful, with especially attractive writing for the woodwinds.



PROGRAMME

WANG CHENWEI

B.1988

THAIPUSAM (2019)

WINDS OF AFFINITY (2014)

The music of Wang Chenwei is widely performed throughout Asia, Europe, Australia, and the USA. His musical and intellectual abilities were apparent from an early age – he excelled as a student of the University of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna, where he took his MA with distinction, studying both composition and audio engineering.

Chenwei rose to prominence with the symphonic poem *The Sisters' Islands*, which was written when he was 17, and for which he was awarded the Singapore Composer Award at the 2006 Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition. A later work, *Confluence*, earned him acclaim from the Prime Minister and secured his reputation as Singapore's leading composer. Chenwei's music is not only popular in the concert hall, but his style and compositional technique have been the subject of analysis by musicologists across Asia. In addition, he has composed pedagogical works for schoolchildren, as well as examination and competition pieces for the piano and violin.

The broad appeal of his music is due to his expert handling of both Asian and Western instruments. Chenwei's technical approach to the craft is borne out by his co-authorship of a treatise on orchestration. Indeed, his knowledge of acoustic theory and tuning systems enables him to compose idiomatically for orchestras of both tradition, whilst retaining his artistic voice.

At present, Chenwei serves as the Composer-in-Residence of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, an adjunct staff member of the Singaporean National Institute of Education and the Academy of Fine Arts, both in Nanyang. He also holds the position of Vice Secretary-General of the Singapore Chinese Music Federation.

The symphonic poem *Thaipusam* takes its name from the Hindu festival, in which devotees practice varying degrees of corporal mortification (such as fasting and skin piercing) to achieve a trancelike state before carrying milk pots in procession, which are then offered to the deity Murugan. Chenwei's originally wrote *Thaipusam* for as a violin solo competition work, but this extremely attractive piece soon caught the imagination of other instrumentalists, and it was only a matter of time before the composer was obliged to write an orchestral version.

The composer describes *Winds of Affinity* as a work of concord, an act of mutual respect between two great musical traditions. This is depicted by two flute soloists playing the same melody, each with the conventions of his own national style. Gradually the two strike up a dialogue, culminating in a fugal section in the orchestra, representing further discourse between the two peoples. Mutual cooperation is symbolised by a rapid cadenza, followed by a slower, nostalgic reminiscence. *Winds of Affinity* ends with the two soloists playing in unison, a gesture of eternal friendship between the two cultures.

TANG JIANPING

B.1955

FLYING SONG (2002)

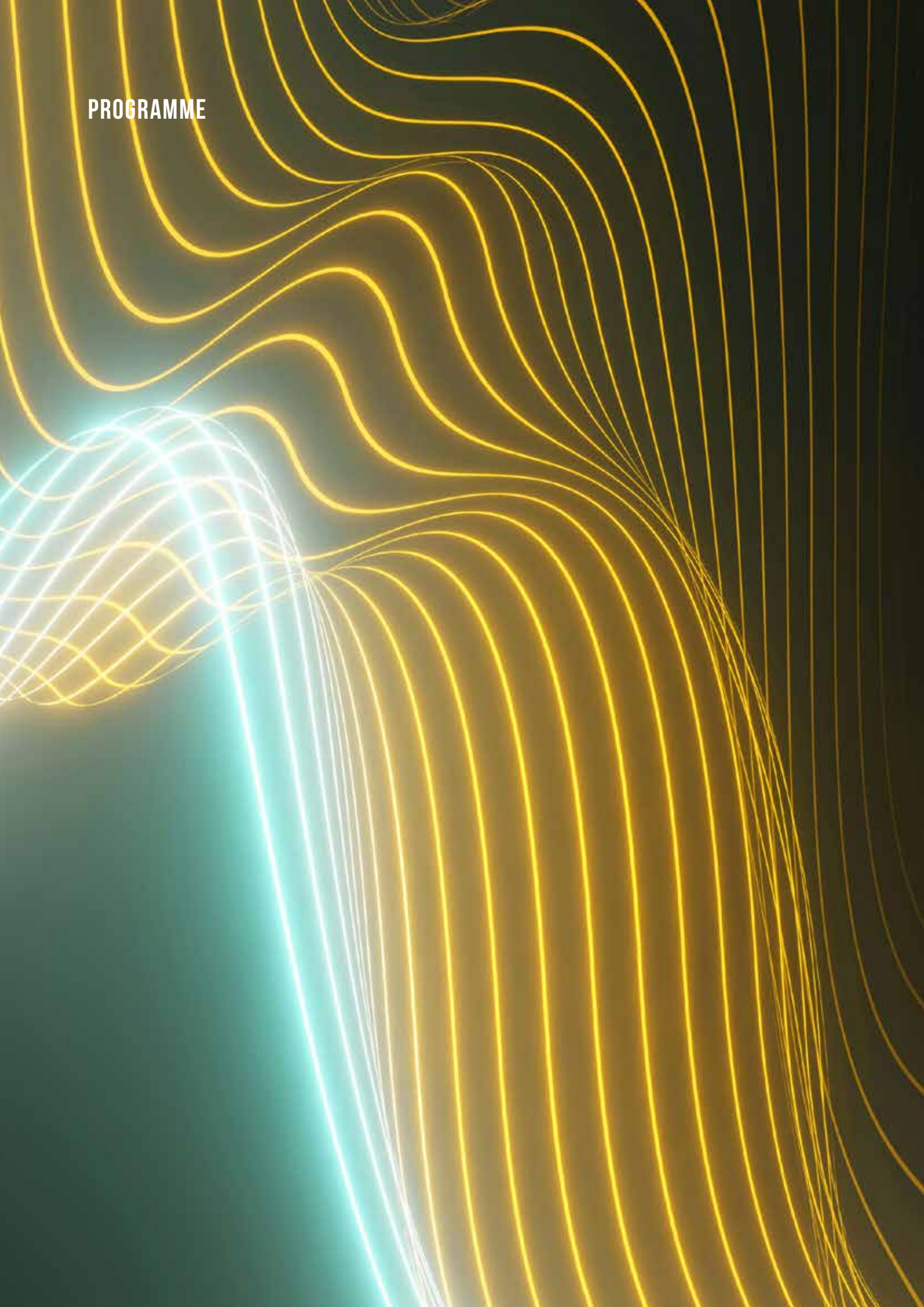
Tang Jianping is an internationally acclaimed Chinese composer, whose music is considered among the finest of its type in the modern era. Jianping achieved the distinction of becoming the first exclusively Chinese-trained composer to attain a doctorate in composition. He is prolific, and composes in several genres, including orchestral works (both symphonic and concerto), choral works, chamber music and opera. Jianping is also in demand as a film composer – he has written the soundtracks to the television series *The Forbidden City* (2005), and the films *Red Cliff* (2008) and *Hector's Search for Happiness* (2014). He is currently the Head of the Composition Department of China's Central Conservatory of Music, and serves on the boards of the Chinese Folk Orchestra Society, the China Symphony Development Foundation, and directs the Chinese Opera Research Institute.

Jianping's most important works include the concertos *Chun Qiu* and *Sacred Fire*, the Buddhist cantata *White Horses among the Reeds* (cantata on Buddhist themes), and the opera *Song of Youth*. The composer has received numerous honours, among them the Chinese Ministry of Culture's distinguished Wenhua Music Award.

Flying Song is a dreamlike movement for recorder and orchestra, in which the composer's ability to balance the soft tones of the solo instrument with its accompaniment is masterfully demonstrated – in particular, the middle register of the recorder is able to speak without apparent effort. The aesthetic is extremely refined and graceful, and certainly the lyrical quality implied by the title is borne out in the effect of the music. *Flying Song* is both nostalgic and hopeful, and the influence of film music is palpable.

Notes by Lance J. Phillip 2025

PROGRAMME



ROBERT SCHUMANN

1810 - 1856

SYMPHONY NO.2 IN C MAJOR, OPUS 61 (1846)

- I. Sostenuto assai – Allegro, ma non troppo
- II. Scherzo: Vivace
- III. Adagio espressivo
- IV. Allegro molto vivace

The emotional power of Schumann's Second symphony is partly due to the manner in which it blurs the line between absolute music and programmatic music. To clarify, the work does not contain a narrative or programme, but the circumstances of Schumann's life during the 1840s certainly help listeners frame the work when listening to it.

By 1845, Schumann's early ambition of a career as a virtuoso pianist was a distant memory, due in part to a (self-inflicted) hand injury, and the drawn-out legal battle with his father-in-law for the right to marry his daughter Clara must have taken considerable toll on the sensitive musician. Sporadic attacks of depression, dizziness, rheumatism and tinnitus had threatened to derail even his composing, but Schumann was able to keep these demons at bay whilst he drafted, refined and orchestrated his C major symphony. It is thus impossible (or at least inhumane) not to imagine this magnificent work as anything but the psychodrama of a great artist battling the scourge of physical and mental illness, and emerging victorious, for a time at least. Certainly, Beethoven's Fifth symphony gains incredible power when the audience identifies with the mighty hero raging against the cruel fate of his deafness – no programme is necessary.

Beethoven's spectre certainly haunts the Second – the unpredictable rhythms of the first movement are hallmarks of the older composer's tragic style. And the trombones (added after the first performance) need no further explanation. But that chorale prelude-like opening suggests that it will be Bach that dominates this symphony – indeed, the Thomascantor is also present in several contrapuntal passages through the work. The scherzo is positively Mendelssohnian, although we sometimes sense that there are scowling goblins underneath the smiling fairy masks (one wonders what Mendelssohn himself thought when he studied the score before conducting the premiere). The second trio sections introduces the BACH (B-flat, A, C, B natural) moniker into the texture.

The Adagio is poignant and nostalgic, almost as if the composer is imagining a procession of his musical ancestors. The dark mood is only banished in the finale, which begins with an upward sweep, and then launches into a heroic, march-like first theme. Rushing violins characterise the second theme, which take a cheeky shot at the overture to Mozart's Marriage of Figaro – and later, Schumann quotes Widmung ('Devotion'), the song he presented to his bride as a wedding present. No doubt she rolled her eyes at the reference, but if Schumann meant that she was the happy reward at the end of all his struggles, then surely the beautiful Clara would have accepted her husband's teasing as a most moving tribute.

CONDUCTOR



HO CHUNG YEH

"From the first bars of the overture, permeated with the oboe's voice, it became obvious: Ho Chung Yeh - the conductor who is not just talented, but also endowed with a special understanding of Tchaikovsky's music. At times it seemed that his wand was really magical..."

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra Music Director Daniel Barenboim personally invited Ho Chung Yeh to conduct his own rehearsal in 1999, and consequently appointed him to the CSO, where he worked closely with esteemed virtuosos and maestros such as Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Charles Dutoit, Ricardo Chailly, Neeme Järvi, Claudio Abbado, and Pinchas Zukerman, among others. A winner at the First Neeme Järvi Master Course/Conducting Competition in 2000, he shared the podium with Maestro Järvi at the grand finale concert of the David Oistrakh Festival in Estonia. Critics described him as "exquisite conducting technique and strong musical feeling", "exceptionally talented", "full of excitement and passion", and "one of the best conductors in the world today".

Yeh traveled extensively in Europe, America and Asia, working with orchestras, composers, soloists, and choirs in the United States, Russia, England, Germany, Finland, Norway, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He has held an international conducting masterclass, two "Ho Chung Yeh International Competition for Traditional Chinese Instruments", and served as a jury member for the 2020 Taipei International Conducting Competition. Since 2020, he serves as a Professor of Conducting and Doctoral Advisor at the Krirk University in Bangkok, Thailand. Yeh received a DMA in conducting, his mentors include the legendary Ilya Musin.

As a cultural ambassador, Yeh has led three principal string players of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to Taiwan for the first time to collaborate with the National Taiwan Symphony

Orchestra (David Taylor, Charles Pikler, Stephen Balderston), and has also invited Chinese traditional instrument musicians overseas to perform with Symphony Orchestras to promote international cultural exchange. In 2025, he led the Koahsiung Chinese Orchestra to participate in "Festival X" in Finland, with Rachel Barton Pine as the soloist. Under his baton, he has performed with the Principal Trombonist Jorgen van Rijen of the Amsterdam Royal Concertgebouw, trombone virtuoso Peter Steiner, Chicago Symphony Principal Trombonist Jay Friedman, Principal Piccolo Walfrid Kujala, Assistant Principal Violist Li-Kuo Chang, trumpeter John Hagstrom; renowned Trumpeters Charles Geyer and Barbara Butler, Blues musician Corky Siegel, Shanghai "Dizi" virtuoso Tang Junqiao, Double Bass Balalaika virtuoso Mikhail Dzyudze, Korean Gayageum Master Yi Ji-young, and Henry Fogel as a narrator (former President of the Chicago Symphony and the American Symphony Orchestra League).

Yeh has served as the Principal Guest Conductor of the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Associate Conductor of the Symphony of Oak Park and River Forest, Music Director of the West Suburban Youth Orchestra of Chicago, and a Board member for the Illinois Council of Orchestras. While serving as the Music Director, he initiated and designed the North Shore Chamber Orchestra Summer Music Festival and the Symphony of Oak Park and River Forest Chamber Orchestra.

SOLOIST

HUI CHIU

Hui Chiu is a dizi (Chinese bamboo flute) soloist from Taipei, Taiwan, and currently a graduate student at the National Taiwan University of Arts, majoring in Chinese music.

She studies under Professor Chen Junxian and has also received guidance from renowned Chinese flutists Zhan Yongming and Sun Yongzhi. In addition to her expertise in dizi, she has studied composition and piano, enriching her musical expression.

Hui serves as principal flutist of the Taipei Chinese Orchestra Youth Ensemble and has performed with numerous professional ensembles including the Taipei Chinese Orchestra, National Chinese Orchestra, Taoyuan Chinese Orchestra, and the Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra. Her performances have taken her across France, the United States, mainland China, and throughout Taiwan.

In 2025, she was selected by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Youth Ambassador, and participated in cultural

exchange programs in Hawaii, the Marshall Islands, and Guam, sharing Taiwanese music with warmth and sincerity across the Pacific.

In 2024, she was selected as an Outstanding Young Artist by the Department of Chinese Music at NTUA and performed at Taiwan's prestigious National Concert Hall in the "Banqiao Music Festival – Echoes of the South Island," where she was featured as the dizi soloist in the commissioned concerto *Puteri Gunung Ledang*.

Known for her lyrical sensitivity and expressive tone, Hui Chiu blends traditional elegance with contemporary energy, offering audiences a poetic and deeply heartfelt musical journey.



SOLOIST



HANDRI LOOTS

Handri Loots is a versatile flautist whose career spans solo, orchestral, and chamber performance, as well as music education.

She holds a BMus (Hons) degree from the University of Pretoria, where she studied under John Hinch, and later refined her artistry in the United Kingdom under the guidance of internationally acclaimed flute pedagogue Trevor Wye. Further studies included work with Jonathan Booty and Andrew Nicholson in the UK, and with French flautist Emma Tessier in Finland.

A laureate of the South African National Flute Competition (FLUFSA), Handri has earned recognition in numerous other competitions, including the ATKV Forte, Oude Meester Foundation, Jim Joël Scholarship, SASOL Music Competition, and the Unisa Licentiate Competition.

Her orchestral experience is extensive. She has served as principal piccolo with both the former PACT Philharmonic

Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra and is a founding member of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. She frequently appears as guest principal flute with the Free State Symphony Orchestra.

Equally committed to music education, Handri teaches at Pretoria Boys' High School and has been involved with the Odeion School of Music at the University of the Free State since 2014 in an ad hoc lecturing capacity.

A passionate chamber musician with a special interest in historically informed performance, she plays baroque flute with Ensemble Fons Partita and the African Renaissance Ensemble. She continues to refine her interpretation of early music through masterclasses with leading European specialists in the field.

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I

Sharon de Kock
(Concertmaster)
Samantha Durrant
(Co-Concertmaster)
Richard Reid
(Assistant Concertmaster)
François Henkins
(Assistant Concertmaster)
Elzanne van Schalkwyk
Lizette Gous-Holloway
Abri van Nieuwenhuizen
Joanie Prinsloo
Bonolo Kgaile

VIOLIN II

Regomoditswe Molosioa
(Principal)
Elspeth Neary
Stefné Raubenheimer
Sue-Phill Petersen
Tsholofelo Tshikare
Maria Yazbek
Stella Mtshali
Isaac Molelekoa
Stephanie Coollen
Thabiso Majoe
Sergio Abdiziet

VIOLA

Kate White
(Guest Principal)
Chair sponsor: André Venter
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John Warner
Elsabé Raath-De Jager
Juretha Swanepoel
Sehle Mosole
Andy Mogowane

CELLO

Anmari van der Westhuizen
(Principal)
Chair sponsor: Frederick Fourie
Tilla Henkins
Piet van Rooyen
Kornelia von Eschwege
John Minnaar

DOUBLE BASS

Ruan Baartman
(Principal)
Asta Budack
Christi-Louise Swanepoel

FLUTE

Handri Loots
(Guest Principal)
Renée Neuhooff

OBOE

Peter Jaspan
(Guest Principal)
Elize Loeb van Zuilenburg

CLARINET

Danré Strydom
(Principal)
Chair sponsor: Katinka Botha
Jenny Brand

BASSOON

Penelope Fraser
(Guest Principal)
Jan-Willem Hoorweg

FRENCH HORN

Dylan Barker
(Guest Principal)
Adriaan Erwee

TRUMPET

Dingaen Chabalala
(Guest Principal)
Andrew Strugnell

TROMBONE

Vuyani Gxavu
(Guest Principal)
Etienne Mecloen
Rick Beukes

TIMPANI

Maritsa Barlow
(Principal)

PERCUSSION

Marie-Elize Venter
(Guest Principal)
Margie Anderson
Marlou Strydom
Hannes Liebenberg
Jada-Ruth Cloete

HARP

Gaylen Sales
(Guest Principal)

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ANNOUNCING OUR 2026 SEASON!

To give you, our dear audience, a glimpse at what's to come at the FSSO in 2026:

14 MARCH

YASUO SHINOZAKI, CONDUCTOR
VIOLINA ANGUELOV, MEZZO-SOPRANO

Ravel: Le Tombeau de Couperin
Berlioz: Nuits d'été
Beethoven: Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"

11 APRIL

DANIEL BOICO, CONDUCTOR
LÉO DE MARIA, PIANO

Khachaturian: Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia from Spartacus
Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 2
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5

16 MAY

ALEXANDER WALKER, CONDUCTOR
RUAN BAARTMAN, DOUBLE BASS

Britten: Suite on English Folk Tunes
Viwe Mkizwana: Concerto for double bass (world premiere)
Mozart: Symphony No. 35, "Haffner"
Stravinsky: Pulcinella Suite

3 OCTOBER

ELISABETH FUCHS, CONDUCTOR
FINALISTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOODWIND COMPETITION AS SOLOISTS

31 OCTOBER

GERRY CORNELIUS, CONDUCTOR
PETER MARTENS, CELLO

Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No. 1

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