

Diana Soh

iota, 2016

world premiere, commissioned by impuls

It is interesting for me, not only to listen in a concert but also to observe the movements and gestural communications between the performers.

I am interested not only in imagining the sonic possibilities of the musical material and its progression, but also in the dramaturgy of the eventual physical performance and how the material might be personified by the instrumentalist. Needless to say, theatricality – but only as a sonic necessity – is of much importance to my music.

For me, composition is a way to have new exciting experiences, and to keep learning about music (and to make sense of our world). Working as a composer needs to be emotionally engaging, intellectually stimulating, and a constant learning process. It is in this spirit that I constantly seek out different ways of composing, of engaging with the material and of working with different ensembles, and also of exploring different disciplines like film and interactive video that use sound in a different way.

In this particular piece *iota* for Klangforum Wien, I wanted to build rich and constant changes in timbre using small attacks at the starting point; to use the combination of instruments to create a composite rhythmic and melodic line.

I also wanted a work that has a clear pulse / groove as one of its characteristics.

The idea is to use the smallest “insignificant” details and to create a larger global richness. The melodic lines are often short and split between different instruments and making sense of it all requires taking in the global sound of the entire ensemble (Klangfarbenmelodie, if you want).

In Chinese characters, each stroke itself encompasses the energy and movement stemming from the physical act of writing. So depending on its combination, we get a graphical symbol (a character) from which we can now derive its connotation and very often its meaning.

Linguistically, the combination of characters sometimes then changes the significance of the characters itself to create contextual meaning.

Eg. the chinese name for the smallest calligraphic stroke (点 diǎn), in combination with other characters it could mean illuminate – (点亮) diǎn liàng highlight – (亮点) liàng diǎn origin – (原点) yuán diǎn destination – (终点) zhōng diǎn

I find all the ideas of “insignificant” details and things used in combination to build a strong and larger global richness to be uplifting and beautiful, especially in the state of affairs of the world today.

It is in this spirit that I started writing *iota*.



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Diana Soh born in 1984, I am a young Singaporean composer whose musical interest is currently directed at exploring performance interactivity. I am interested in writing music that includes the physical aspects of music making and my music tends to be characterized by interruptive oppositions between surface activities and passivity with a renewed passion for the use of electronics.

My works have been performed in venues and festivals as varied as the Manifeste Festival, the Royaumont Voix Nouvelles, the Acanthes Festival, and the June in Buffalo Festival among many others. It has also been broadcast recently on the BBC Radio 3 and France Musique.

I have had the good fortune of working with musicians such as the late James Avery, Magnus Andersson, Tony Arnold, NEO Norrbotten, Cikada Ensemble, Ensemble Court Circuit, Arditti Quartet and many more. An alumnus of the National University of Singapore's YST Conservatory of Music, I have recently finished my doctoral studies at the University at Buffalo under the tutelage of David Felder and have spent the last two years at IRCAM for the Cursus 1 and 2 (2011–2013) program.

My move from Buffalo to Paris also came with the opportunity to contribute to my newfound community as the composer-in-residence (2012–2013) at the Conservatoire D'Ivry sur Seine in partnership with La Muse en Circuit. The end of my residency in 2013 was marked with my first portrait concert as part of the Festival Extension, with the kind sponsorship of l'ARIAM and l'ADIAM94.

This upcoming concert season consists of numerous new commissions and collaborations that is taking me to many places I have yet to visit...

Currently residing in Paris, I am enjoying putting dots on paper (yes, the old-fashioned way!), eating great food, and seizing inspiration from the city's vibrant cultural life.