

No Exit continues Cleveland Composers Series this week

by Tian Yoon Teh

A bird in squallying winds
swiftly pivots

A teen about to pick up
a coin penny

A grape vine's fantasy
that extends a tendril

A sea waves ebb
that shrugs like a spine

鸟儿在疾风中
迅速转向

少年去捡拾
一枚分币

葡萄藤因幻想
而延伸的触丝

海浪因退缩
而耸起的背脊

“Arc” by Gù Chéng

“弧线”，顾城 著

This poem served as inspiration for Hong-Da Chin's *...the arc of a tear...*, which depicts a tear flowing down one's face very slowly.

You can hear Chin's vivid work when No Exit continues their Cleveland Composers Series on Saturday, December 8 at 3:00 pm at the Bop Stop. Joining the ensemble will be special guest [Patchwork Duo](#) — Noa Even, saxophone, and Stephen Klunk,

drum set. The evening will include works by James Praznik, Colin Holter, Ty Emerson, and Timothy Beyer. The program will be repeated on Friday, December 14 at 8:00 pm at SPACES. As always, the concerts are free.



What is striking about the Chinese influence in composition is the poetry of images depicted in sound. Chin uses such imagery in his recent works. When asked about *...the arc of a tear...* during a telephone conversation, Chin laughed. “The title is exactly what the piece is. In fact, I now like to compose with a title first!”

In this piece, Chin paints the trajectory of a tear with descending melodic arcs, which are passed among flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano, and

percussion. He does not reach for the sonic artifact nor use a pentatonic scale that would read “Chinese.” Instead, he encapsulates the poet’s contemplation of life after the Cultural Revolution in China. By depicting Gù’s cultural philosophy through microtones, he quotes neither the East nor the West, but integrates them both.

Chin appreciates subtle changes in pitch, which leads him to divide the octave into 24 microtones instead of the conventional 12 tones. To him, the expression of a half step is not enough. Microtonality is more natural, whereas the chromatic scale is like a box that someone else set for him.

Says Chin, “起承转合 — an arc has a beginning, a climax, and a decline to death, like the arc of life. There’s an old saying: 分久必合, 合久必分 — what was long apart will unite, and what was long united will part. In my interpretation, that is the spirit of the poet in the moment — contemplating the Cultural Revolution that just happened.”

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