

## Resonance Project presents: Songs of Nature

by Mike Telin



With the mission to make classical music accessible for first-time listeners by engaging with the audience in ways that extend beyond normal concert settings, The Resonance was the first classical music series on Seattle's Eastside associated with a dedicated performance space, Resonance at Soma Towers.

Now based in Cleveland, The Resonance Project will continue that audience engagement on Sunday June 1 at 5:00 pm in Forest Hill Church with "Songs of Nature." Baroque instrumentalists join West African drummer and vocalist Assane M'Baye for a program combining Vivaldi's *Violin Concerto in g*, "Summer," with Senegalese folk song. Also on the playlist is Davide Perez's *Sinfonia*, "*La tempestad del Mar*," and Jean-Féry Rebel's *Les Éléments*. Pay-what-you-can, tickets are available [online](#).



"The Resonance Project has two sides — classical and early music concerts," pianist Irwin Shung, who along with harpsichordist Qin Ying Tan founded The Resonance Project, explained. He added that the early music arm of the organization performs under the banner CLE Concierto. Sunday's performers include Qin Ying Tan (artistic director and harpsichord), Assane M'Baye (drummer/singer), Guillermo Salas-Suárez and Ann Yu (Baroque violins), Andrew Hatfield (Baroque viola), René Schiffer (Baroque cello), Brian Kay (plucked strings), and Brennen Taggart (violone).

Shung said that he and Tan are always looking for interesting ways to connect the audience to the music. “No matter if it’s classical or early music, we try to create imaginative re-imaginings.”

One example of an imaginative re-imagining was their Lenten Reflections program which paired Rachmaninoff’s Opus 23 Preludes with Franck’s Prelude, Chorale, and Fugue, FWV 21. “We asked a local poet to write a poem for each Rachmaninoff prelude and we had some fantastic readers narrate them.”

Qin Ying Tan said that the inspiration for Sunday’s program happened organically. “I’m a student of Papa Assane M’Baye and the director of music and organist at Forest Hill Church. And on Palm Sunday we began with an African drum rhythm that we had learned from Papa Assane. I had just segued into a hymn when he said ‘I can drum with this.’ So he jumped and started drumming along with the organ. The congregational singing came alive in a way that I’ve never heard before.” After that Palm Sunday, Tan and M’Baye talked about how Baroque music has a natural lilt that is similar to African drumming. “I feel like the earthiness of the Vivaldi has this sort of groove that naturally invites accompaniment by the drums.”

Tan said that “Songs of Nature” is a program she has wanted to do for a long time simply because of her interest in nature. “I think that people who are taking note of what’s happening in nature will connect with it. And Papa Assane recommended some songs and music that have similar nature themes in both the European and African traditions.”

The program includes the traditional Senegalese song, *Asico* as well as Davide Perez’s recently discovered *Sinfonía “La tempestad del Mar,”* and Jean-Féry Rebel’s *Les Éléments*.

Tan said that after the Vivaldi there will be two folk songs from Senegal. The first is *Bawenane daniouya* (a prayer for water.) “The first part is ‘Let’s pray for the water to come down and the second part is ‘the water is here.’ There’s a lot of energy in this song. That is paired with a song about a girl called Ceenearo whose lover has gone off to war. And she’s asking her elders, ‘how can I show my love and what should I do?’”

Following the performance the audience is invited to an after-concert reception which will include a demonstration by Papa Assane M’Baye’s drum ensemble, TamTam Magic.

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