

Beethoven back in the Botanic Gardens

Shreya Srivastava



Concert series Beethoven Im Garten returns to the Singapore Botanic Gardens on Saturday after a two-year hiatus.

It will be Singapore's first full orchestral outdoor concert with international participation since the pandemic began, with guest musicians from Germany's Dresden Philharmonic and its affiliate Kurt Masur Academy joining the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory Orchestra.

Singaporean conductor Wong Kah Chun (above) returns to lead the orchestra in Beethoven's Fourth Symphony and the final movement of Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony.

The maestro, 35, who is known internationally as Kahchun Wong, is chief conductor of the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra in Germany and principal guest conductor of the Japan Philharmonic.

"I finally return to Singapore after 1½ years of not being able to see my parents. I am very glad to be back," he says in an e-mail interview in the midst of a busy month jetting between Tokyo, Nuremberg and Seat-

tle to conduct concerts.

Wong, one of the last students of the late German conducting legend Kurt Masur, made his conducting debut with the Dresden Philharmonic last year and will lead it again for the Dresden Music Festival this year.

Beethoven Im Garten is an initiative by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Singapore, jointly presented with the Foundation for the Arts and Social Enterprise.

This year, the open-air concert will have an audience capacity of more than 1,000, with Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat as the guest of honour. The event is ticketed, but admission is free. It will also be live-streamed on the German Embassy's Facebook page.

Wong says the concert series, which he established with the German Embassy in 2018, "has been the one link that brings me back home on an annual basis to do something meaningful for Singaporean audiences".

He adds: "I am very grateful for the German Embassy's support because they believed in my vision of building cultural bridges and meaningful mentorship opportunities through music."

Dr Norbert Riedel, the German Ambassador to Singapore, says in a

BEETHOVEN IM GARTEN

WHERE Shaw Foundation
Symphony Stage, Singapore
Botanic Gardens, 1 Cluny Road;
online

MRT Botanic Gardens

WHEN Saturday, 6pm

ADMISSION Free with registration
at str.sg/wnmk; live stream at
t1p.de/wwnl

INFO str.sg/wnm4

VISITING ARTISTS SERIES: COLLENBUSCH QUARTET

WHERE Yong Siew Toh
Conservatory of Music Concert
Hall, 3 Conservatory Drive

MRT Kent Ridge

WHEN Sunday, 5pm

ADMISSION \$10 from str.sg/wnmc

- Only ticket holders who are fully vaccinated or exempted from vaccination-differentiated safe management measures may be admitted.

statement: "We pledge to revitalise people-to-people exchanges through this year's edition, provid-

ing a meaningful opportunity to enrich lives through music as well as to honour the commitment of all the artists involved."

The concert will cap a week-long residency by the visiting German musicians at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, where they will coach students and conduct masterclasses.

The Dresden Philharmonic's Colleenbusch Quartet and clarinetist Daniel Hochstoger will also perform an evening of chamber music on Sunday.

Before leaving for Singapore, the guest musicians from Dresden took part in a solidarity singing event to show their support for Ukraine amid the ongoing Russian invasion. Dresden is near the Polish border and receiving many Ukrainian refugees.

Dresden Philharmonic chief executive Frauke Roth says: "As we prepare ourselves for a life in which we have learnt to live with Covid-19, we also need to respect culture as an integral part of our society and treat it accordingly."

"It is the young generation that has been particularly affected by the pandemic and I am confident that we can take the project to new heights via additional exchange opportunities."