

TE AHUREI
TOI O TĀMAKI

AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL



朱宗慶打擊樂團

JU PERCUSSION GROUP

Energy ∞ Infinite

Great Hall, Auckland Town Hall

16 March 2024

About Ju Percussion Group

The Ju Percussion Group (JPG) comprises 21 talented percussionists and one composer in residence. The group devotes itself to performance, education and percussion promotion. JPG has become known worldwide for its innovative blends of the East and West, traditional and contemporary. The members possess transcendental virtuosity in playing Western percussion instruments as well as different forms of traditional Asian music.

Through more than 3,000 domestic and international performances, JPG has greatly expanded Taiwan's presence on the international percussion map. To date, the group has played in 34 different countries around the world, cultivating more than 150,000 percussion learners by means of its instruction system. Besides, the group has been commissioned to create as many as 267 pieces so far. The growth of JPG is, so to speak, a reflection of how contemporary percussion develops on the island.



Ju, Tzong-Ching Founder and Artistic Director of Ju Percussion Group

The well-known percussionist has played a significant role in enhancing the wide interest in percussion music in Taiwan over the last three decades,

and has been inducted by the Percussive Arts Society (PAS) into its Hall of Fame in 2016. The popularity of percussion music in Taiwan owes a great deal to Ju for his pioneering efforts in music education.

In 1986, Ju founded Taiwan's first percussion ensemble, the Ju Percussion Group. Three years later, the Ju Percussion Group Foundation was formed to manage JPG's administrative affairs. In 1991, he established the Ju Percussion Music School, the first domestically developed percussion education system in Taiwan. In 1993, he organised the Taiwan International Percussion Convention (TIPC), successfully introducing the most avant-garde trend of percussion art in the world to Taiwan. In 1999, he founded the Taipei International Percussion Summer Camp (TIPSC), giving an opportunity for percussion students to expand their musical visions.

He has served as the Director of National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, the Director and the Chairman of the Board of National Theatre and National Concert Hall (NTCH), the Principal of Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA). From January 2017 to April 2022, he served as the chairman of the National Performing Arts Center.

At present, Ju is the Artistic Director of Ju Percussion Group, Chair Professor of Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), and Emeritus Professor of National Taiwan University of Arts (NTUA).

Ju, Tzong-Ching
Artistic Director

Wu, Shih-San
Director

Hwang, Kuen-Yean
*Senior Member and
Associate Director*

Wu, Pei-Ching
Senior Member

Lu, Huan-Wei
*Member and
Assistant Artistic Director*

Lee, Pei-Hsun
Member

Chen, Hong-Yue
Member

Chen, Miao-Fei
Member

Tai, Han-Chih
Member

Kao, Han-Yen
Member

Lee, Tsui-Yun
Member

Chen, Szu-Lun
Chief Executive Officer

Hou, Wei-Ru
Programming Specialist

Chen, Wei-Chi
Photographer

Lin, Yi
Audio Engineer

1. **3 Epilogues (16'40")** by Gérard Leconte

Some might consider music without lyrics hard to relate to; a lot of times these songs get branded abstruse and pushed away. The truth is fundamental of music comes from our memories and cultures; if you're willing to open your mind, through a melody or a beat, you can always connect deeply in to the mind and build a link toward his own musical references only known by himself even if the composer's inspiration sources are clearly identified.

Pure music gives us a boundless space for imagination and a unique inspiration for every individual. The musical writing is intentionally harmonic and melodic and the instruments used, in particular the keyboards, allow for a thru orchestration work. The outcome is a very coloured music, sometimes charming, where the orchestration takes precedence over the final result. From a classical form, these three movements, fast, slow, fast, require from the performers a great velocity and a developed sense of musicality.

2. **Beyond the bEnd (12'30")** by Gene Koshinski

'Beyond the bEnd' is a score for percussion soloist with percussion ensemble (five players total). In the opening of the work the ensemble sings, in unison, chant-like lines that present, simultaneously, both the sonic thematic material and the poetic reference the piece hinges on. Musically, the piece is tied to a three-note motive of Bb, Db, and Eb (those letters highlighted in the title) that can be heard throughout, initially heard in the opening voices, and thread through the ensemble for the duration of the piece. This theme refrains from developing, yet transforms throughout the work as it is bent into different

timbres through orchestrational treatment. Concurrently, the work is structured around a poetic theme, which is inspired by a short unfinished poem by Brandon Reid Swaim:

When You Bend (unfinished)
When you bend something
It will strike back and bend you
This is the relationship
Between society and nature

3. **Solar Myth (9'40")**

by Chang, Chiung-Ying

The piece was inspired by a legend shared by several indigenous tribes of Taiwan. It is said in ancient times there were many suns in the sky, and the people were suffering. The tribesmen were so desperate that they decided to shoot down the extra suns.

The composer thinks that, metaphorically speaking, this kind of struggle occurred not only in ancient times but also occurs on a daily basis. In fact, we are waging this battle deep down inside every day as we strive to triumph over challenges as good and evil struggle within us.

The work is for six mallets and three percussionists, which allows it to express the multi-tonal quality of competitive playing. The performers' movements on the stage represent the scene in which the suns are shot, and express what this implies in the real world. A great sense of theatrical tension is felt throughout the piece.

INTERVAL

4. **Kyoto (8'30")**

by John Psathas

"The work's title refers to the recording of an improvisation by pianist Keith Jarrett that took place in Kyoto on 5 November 1976. This improvisation of Jarrett's is, more than anything, the piece of music that woke the composer in me, and set me on this journey of creating my own music for others. I have returned to this performance of Jarrett's ever since and it has been my 'true north', my guiding star. In the writing of 'Kyoto' I was also inspired by the Ju Percussion Group's bubbly, vibrant and positively charged attitude. When watching and hearing this group I always feel a feather-light energy that connects strongly within me to the underlying positivism of Jarrett's music. This positive energy, passed through performance to the listener, is the unique gift that music offers." – John Psathas. 'Kyoto' is dedicated to the Ju Percussion Group on its 25th Anniversary for five percussionists.

5. **Seek (16'00")**

by Lu, Huan-Wei

This is a six-mallet marimba composition with a three-percussion accompaniment.

"In the process of pursuing musical perfection, I have passed through many stages: 'chasing' technical proficiency, 'exploring' performance possibilities, 'indecision' regarding the achievement of goals, a sense of 'loneliness', and, in the end, a 'commitment' to my love for music that kept me pushing forward. Accordingly, this composition is divided into five sections: 'Chase, Exploration, Indecision, Loneliness and Commitment' in an attempt

to present the process and emotions along the road to perfection.

On an artistic path, musicians demand much of themselves as they pursue a 'state of perfection' in their performance. They explore different performance techniques with composers to develop new tonal possibilities, develop entirely new compositions, and work to create a wellspring of creativity. They eventually pass the baton to the next generation who continue to explore and follow in their footsteps.

As someone who was part of the rapid development of percussion in Taiwan, I have benefitted greatly from the hard work of those before me. In the days ahead, I look forward to continuing to progress and explore and giving it my all regarding the future development of percussion.

A deep thanks to Professor Ju and the Ju Percussion Group for their ongoing support of new, creative compositions. Their support has infused the field of percussion with a sense of energy, vitality, and endless possibility. Also a big thanks to the members of my percussion group. I look forward to continuing to explore the many possibilities of percussion with all of you."
– Lu, Huan-Wei

6. J Effect (7'30") by Lu, Huan-Wei

This composition is an octet that is mainly based on percussions. Its creation was inspired by the scientific theory of the 'butterfly effect' which is "a phenomenon in which a small perturbation in the initial condition of a system results in a huge chain reaction."

30 years ago, when Professor Ju returned from studies in Vienna, he successively founded the Ju Percussion Group, Ju Percussion Group Foundation, and Ju Percussion Music School. Ju's actions caused a huge impact on both the Taiwanese music scene and the world percussion scene, which is like the butterfly effect.

In this work, the composer divided the composition into different sections: 'time signature', 'timbre', 'rhythm', and 'volume'. When one of the elements is changed, it will in turn change the momentum of the composition, thereby producing a different result. The process, much like the butterfly effect, is impacted by collective items.

7. Tsá-Tshi (8'30") by Kao, Han-Yen

The style of the piece – in both its form and context – is that of a bustling outdoor market (Tsá – Tshi), one full of life and community. To maintain their livelihood, the stall keepers fully apply themselves to their work. Different stalls have different appearances, much like the traditional markets in which you can smell different smells, see different sights and feel the beating heart of Taiwan.

The entire piece is performed in a whimsical manner, the performance style nimble and agile, similar to that of a dotted collage. The seven performers each portray a different stall. Representing a range of different personalities and ideas, the performers come together to support and help each other. As one, they give life to the set to create a bustling marketplace before our very eyes.



Kōtuitui

A special performance to celebrate Indigenous musical artists.

In recognition of the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages and in the spirit of Indigenous connection and creativity, *Kōtuitui* brings together performers from three world cultures to demonstrate the traditional instruments that are played in their respective homelands.

Featuring artists from **Haumanu Collective** (Aotearoa), **Pamyua** (Alaska) and **William Barton** (Australia), Indigenous creative ingenuity comes to the fore as these artists share their musical heritage and combine their multiple talents to compose a bespoke piece of music to be enjoyed by all.

Concert Chamber, Auckland Town Hall
Sat 23 March, 4.00pm

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To learn more about us, visit aaf.co.nz/contact.

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