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PRESS RELEASE

To Arts and Features Editors
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HKACT!
Act 8
BIONICPIANO



BIONICPIANO

An experimental concert-installation of music by HK-based composer and 2018 Guggenheim Fellow, Eugene Birman, featuring performers Kawai Chan and Justin Siu, presented by Osage Art Foundation under its HKACT! (Hong Kong Art, Culture and Technological Innovation) platform on October 15 and 16.

The performer and the performed; the pianist and the piano.

Every year, tens of thousands of degrees are awarded to young musicians all over the world. They play their Chopin, they bow, they move on. Their link to their instrument is incidental: to create sound, you need to play something. But aside from that functional relationship, aside from that quid pro quo, the instrument is really just an instrument. It is not playing; it's all a one-way street.

BIONICPIANO - in approximately one hour, and perhaps even less, for two consecutive evenings, will explore the lines of classical music that performers are least compelled to cross. It's the line where we become the instrument, where the instrument becomes us. The HK premiere of RUMOR by EUGENE BIRMAN for violoncello and piano, as well as the world premiere of its solo piano version, will be presented alongside the composer's D Major Preludes, which take and transcend material from famous piano music of the 19th and 20th century by Chopin, Rachmaninov, and others.

Presented as an installation, not a traditional concert, audiences will experience a fusion of performer and performed, where one must play oneself as much as the piano, where the sound of the piano is as likely to come from ourselves as it is from the instrument, and where the human voice, whether it whistles, sings, or screams, is just an extension of the keyboard.

KAWAI CHAN, virtuoso pianist, joined by JUSTIN SIU, a jazz contrabassist who on this occasion will take on the cello, will bring to life this music of extremism and extreme expression. BIONICPIANO asks not only how far the demands on a performer can really reach, but how far is the performer him/herself willing to go to become the instrument. If the ultimate aim of technology is to merge the human with the human-created, then surely it's the moment our own artistic selves become one with the strings, keys, and hammers that transcends performance, renders us bionic.

Described as "electrifying and earth-shaking" (Eesti kultuurileht SIRP) and music "of high drama" (BBC World TV), BIONICPIANO is the first portrait presentation of Eugene Birman's music in Hong Kong.

About the Artists

Eugene Birman

A composer of music of “high drama” and “intense emotion” (BBC), “at once, ingenious, hypnotic, brave, and beautiful” (Festival Internazionale A.F. Lavagnino), **Eugene Birman** (b. 1987) has written for symphony orchestras (London Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orquestra Gulbenkian), choirs (BBC Singers, Latvian Radio Choir, Eric Ericsons Kammarkör), and leading ensembles and soloists (Maxim Vengerov, Maurizio Ben Omar, etc.) across four continents in venues ranging from London’s Southbank Centre to Carnegie Hall to above the Arctic Circle. His highly public career, with appearances on CNN, BBC World TV, Radio France, Deutsche Welle, and others, is characterized by a fearless focus on socially relevant large-scale compositions covering the financial crisis, Russian border treaties, and more. Commissioners and partners for Birman’s work extend beyond the concert hall to major international bodies such as the European Union, the Austrian Foreign Ministry, and the Hong Kong SAR, as well as through prominent fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (2018) and the US Department of State’s Fulbright Program (2010-11). Most recently, he was awarded the 2017 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize, leading to a season-long residency at the Southbank Centre and world premiere with the Philharmonia Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall, and appointed the sole Artist-in-Residence of the 2018 Helsinki Festival, Finland’s biggest yearly cultural event. A D.Phil recipient from the University of Oxford, he also holds degrees from Columbia University, the Juilliard School, and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana.

Justin Siu is a multi-disciplinary musician who can feel equally at home on the band stand in a jazz club, in the cello section of a symphony orchestra or on the conductor podium for his jazz orchestra. While he started learning classical cello at the age of 9, garnered awards during his youth, attended the University of Cambridge, from which he obtained his M.A. in computer science, ironically under a music award, his real pursuit for music did not begin until years later when the former computer geek put down the keyboard and picked up the double bass instead. His new course soon brought him acclaim as a jazz bassist, having collaborated with many renowned local and foreign jazz artists, and paved way for his pioneering vision on creative projects that bring music, computer technology and multimedia visuals together. Usually as band/section leader or soloist, Siu has an extensive cross-genre resume: Daegu International Jazz Festival (S. Korea 2018), Hong Kong International Jazz Festival (2016 & 2017), Macau Jazz Week (2015, as sideman), Tango Apasionado Concert Series (2016-2018), Andy Hui 17Oz Concert (2017), Miriam Yeung World Tour (2015), Theatre Cabaret des Années Folles at Le French May (2013), Yagotta-swing, ft. jazz pianist Chihiro Yamanaka (2012), Piccadilly Revisited, Hong Kong Arts Festival (2011), Imogen Heap Hong Kong Concert (2010), Musical Moments (2012-2014) and The Phantom of the Opera (2006). Among all his work, perhaps the most significant was his own orchestra for the Grammy Nominated Howard McCrary, which garnered wide acclaim with shows in Beijing and Macau, and also Howard’s own sensational, talk-of-the-town concert at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in July 2013. In 2018, Siu released his self-produced and arranged jazz album “SPIN”, under Universal Music Hong Kong, along with Hong Kong’s premiere jazz pianist Ted Lo, Canadian vocalist Janaia Farrell and French drummer Laurent Robin. The album became number one best-selling Jazz album at HMV in Hong Kong for 6 weeks.

Kawai Chan has performed extensively as a soloist and collaborative artist in Italy, Austria, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and throughout the United States. She has performed with various orchestras including Orchestra della Fondazione Salina and Orchestra Filarmonica Italiana in Italy. Awarded first prize at the Mary Hayes North competition and the Empire State Piano competition in New York, Chan was also a finalist at the Thousand Island Piano Competition. A recipient of many grants and fellowships, Chan was awarded a full scholarship to attend Ithaca College where she also graduated magna cum laude, and at Peabody Conservatory she was awarded the Peabody Grant for her Master's studies. During her doctorate studies at Michigan States University, Chan was one of the two winners of the Research Enhancement Award in addition to the other scholarship and fellowship. Her principal teachers include Read Gainsford, Boris Slutsky, and George Vatchnadze. Recently relocated back to Hong Kong, Chan is active in both performing and teaching. She has given recitals and collaborated with various artists and performed at different concert series including Music Alive Series at HKUST, Citibank Plaza Concert Series; Art, Culture, and Music at the airport; and Music of Friends at RTHK Radio 4. Chan is currently an adjunct lecturer and artist teacher at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Fact Sheet

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| Project Name | HKACT! ACT 8 BIONICPIANO |
| Events | Vernissage / BIONICPIANO Tuesday 15 October 2019, 7.00 - 8.00pm Wednesday 16 October 2019, 7.00 – 8.00pm Eugene Birman, piano Justin Siu, cello Kawai Chan, piano |
| Venue | Osage, 4/F, 20 Hing Yip Street, Kwun Tong |
| Presented by | Osage Art Foundation |
| Supported by | Tom Lee Music |

About Osage Art Foundation

Osage Art Foundation was established in 2005 with three main goals – fostering Creative Communities, promoting Cultural Co-operation and building Creative Capacity and has since played an active role in developing education and training of young people, broadening cultural awareness and participation in artistic endeavours, nurturing creativity and critical thinking and fostering international cultural exchange.

The Osage Art Foundation is now well known and recognized by the local community and internationally as having initiated many pioneering projects of international caliber.

The current focus of the Osage Art Foundation is on developing deeper discourse in and around the arts in the wider community. We believe that research, analysis, examination and promulgation of issues pertaining to society, contemporary culture and value by artists, writers, critics, curators and commentators will build better understanding of regional perspectives throughout Asia and beyond.

About



In 2015 the Osage Art Foundation began developing HKACT!, a major platform for the promotion of Art Culture and Technological Innovation in Hong Kong.

HKACT! celebrates art and ideas by bringing together visionary thinkers and innovators to help chart the future of a better society through a series of ground-breaking, cutting edge, innovative, technological art and cultural projects.

HKACT! aims to:

- * Articulate a Vision for the Future.
- * Fuel the Growth of the Creative and Cultural Industries.
- * Be a Catalyst for Thought Leadership.
- * Explore Alternative Education Methodology.

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