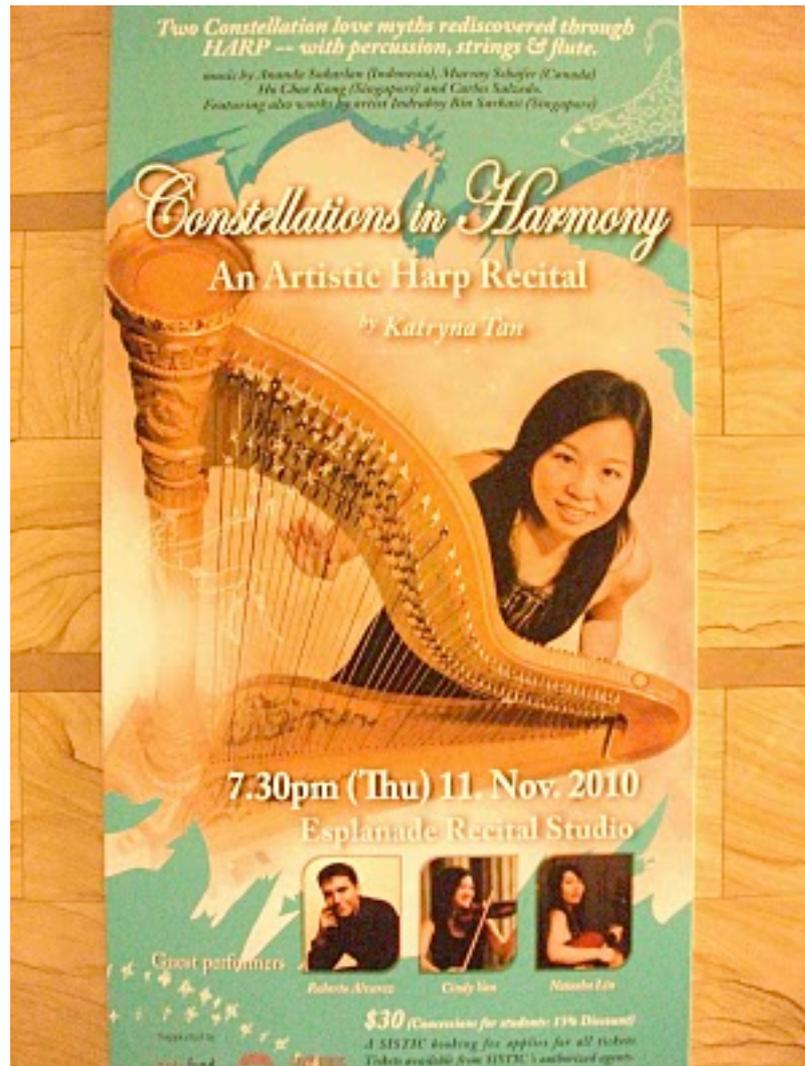


SATURDAY, 13 NOVEMBER, 2010



CONSTELLATIONS IN HARMONY
Katryna Tan, Harp
Esplanade Recital Studio
Thursday (11 November 2010)

This review was published in *The Straits Times* on 13 November 2010.

The age-old notion of star-crossed lovers and legends immortalised in star constellations was the subject of Young Artist Award recipient Katryna Tan's latest harp recital. The two major works were as varied as separate galaxies themselves.

Canadian R.Murray Schafer's *The Crown of Ariadne* (left) was previously performed by Tan in this same venue. Described by the composer as a "theatre of confluence", there was some awkwardness on the performer's part in managing no less than 8 different percussion instruments, including putting on and taking off ankle bells, besides playing the harp.

Tan was ever the cool customer, delivering the “one woman band” spiel about Theseus battling the Minotaur with much assurance and aplomb. Pity she had to saddle herself with delivering the pre-performance narrative as well, marked by distinctly Malaysian-accented English and mispronouncing the man-eating beast as a “*minah-tuah*”.

She was joined by flutist Roberto Alvarez, violinist Cindy Yan and cellist Natasha Liu (the latter two being her partners in the glamorous I-Sis Trio, below)) for the World Premiere of Indonesian composer Ananda Sukarlan’s *Vega & Altair* (Left). Based on the Chinese myth of the seamstress and the cowherd, its seven movements traversed through different styles without actually settling on a definitive one.

Alvarez opened with an Indonesian theme, typical of those melodies heard on a *suling* (Balinese flute) played over gamelan chimes. The counterpoint with the violin was well crafted and the music later moved to a more modern and dramatic style, with the dissonances recalling Bartok and Prokofiev. The love music featuring all four was to be altogether more sentimental and cloying, the sort often accompanying children’s bedtime stories on television. This melange was generally easy on the ear but fitfully memorable.

More to the point was Singaporean Ho Chee Kong’s *Evening Lights* (left), a musical memoir of the Esplanade of yore, when sampans and satay-sellers plied the environs of Elizabeth Walk. Its strolling pace and calming strains distinguished this subtly Asian flavoured serenade.

Closing the recital was American Carlos Salzedo’s virtuosic *Variations on a Theme in Ancient Style*, providing Tan with the opportunity to display a full gamut of tricks and an encyclopaedic mastery on 46 strings. Repertoire for the modern harp is growing, and Katryna Tan is its most fervent proselytiser in this land.