

Harping on mesmerising beauty

› concert

HARPerCussion

Katryna Tan, Harp & Friends

Esplanade Recital Studio

Sunday

Chang Tou Liang

THE intriguing title of this concert refers to Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer's *The Crown Of Ariadne*, a work for the harp which requires the artist to perform on an array of percussion instruments as well.

Such wide-ranging repertoire is to be found in *Spectrum*, a quarterly concert series with an emphasis on contemporary music, held at The Esplanade. The series was inaugurat-

ed by the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory's New Music Ensemble in November last year.

This harp-plus recital by Malaysian-born Katryna Tan played to a full house of over 250, suggesting that the Young Artist Award recipient of 2005 has spawned a cult-like following among harp enthusiasts here.

She commanded the stage with an arsenal of varied techniques: creating unnerving glissandi on single strings, crafting quarter tones and blowing through the strings with a cylinder.

Choreographing the dances of *Ariadne*, *Theseus* and the *Minotaur* was also a triumph of

the will. Having to coordinate bells strapped to both ankles, striking drums, cymbals and bells with sticks, and finally performing a duet with herself on tape presented a tour de force of concentration and showmanship.

The rest of the programme was less dramatic, but no less absorbing. Chinese cellist Junyan Natasha Liu was Tan's able partner in Belgian composer Francis de Bourguignon's *Prelude Et Danse*, a highly lyrical slow-fast study in the accessible post-Faure idiom.

Spanish flautist Roberto Alvarez's penetrating sonority on long sinuous melodies was the perfect foil to the chords and

ostinatos provided by Tan as the duo journeyed through the emotional troughs and peaks of American Lowell Liebermann's *Sonata*.

All three musicians were united in Frenchman Jean-Michel Damase's lusciously opulent *Trio*. Its two movements found lugubriousness from the cello and luminous lightness from the flute. With the harp's unrelenting playfulness, the result was one of mesmerising beauty and contrasts.

As an encore, Singaporean Ho Chee Kong's *Evening Lights* for solo harp came with the freshness of a breath mint, just the right palate-tickler after a sumptuous musical feast.