

## PROGRAM NOTES

“I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.”

-Maya Angelou

These words by Maya Angelou so beautifully articulate the innate human drive to see our history and build something anew. There is a fundamental human craving to build a new life, to create art out of a fractured and multifaceted past. We meet each of the women in this recital at a crucial and transformative pinnacle of their lives. How do we find hope and renewal in the face of a seemingly unchangeable present? How does our past inform our future?

The title of the recital comes of the last line of the first piece of the program, *Smoke and Distance* by Tonia Ko. The piece sets an intense reflection on a past love, once like the “upward swish of a rocket,” existing now only in memory. The piano mimics this poetic reflection through the pianist’s creation of its own resonance, forming a sonic memory. Despite the passage of time, love is not lost and is simply renewed.

The voices of the women in this recital are experiencing some of life’s greatest, even catastrophic, encounters and events. As we meet the queens of Libby Larsen’s *Try Me*, *Good King*, we are confronted by their ability to come to terms with unchangeable and deathly circumstances. In the rapid shifts and immense turmoil of these moments, each of them embodies the clarity of the internal world or a call for change in their external world that characterizes a renewal of life.

Jocelyn Morlock’s “*Amore*” sets the proverb, “Nothing is more tame, or more wild, than love,” in an improvisatory rhapsody of passion. A poetry recitation of Emily Dickinson’s “*We talked as Girls do*” links this to the coming of age and eventual dissolution of first love in *Songs for a Winter’s Evening* by Thea Musgrave. Perhaps these pieces can be a microcosm in which we can reflect upon the intense need for humanity to cling onto love and hope, and its ability to be a catalyst for change.

Sarah Kirkland Snider’s setting of “*How Graceful Some Things Are, Falling Apart*” allows us to reflect upon the sense of grace and beauty that humanity can find when we join in community to heal after destruction, not much unlike the circumstances we have all been dealing with over the past two years.

It is at the crux and pinnacle of life's circumstances – some might call this a breaking point – that we are confronted by our ability to gather strength and push through to forge a new life. The women in this program challenge us to cling onto love despite life-altering and shattering circumstances, finding a sense of renewed life.

- Yvette Keong