

Vivian Fung (b. 1975), Violin Concerto No. 1, 2011

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Fung first studied composition with Canadian composer, Violet Archer, and later in Paris, with Narcis Bonet. She holds three degrees from Julliard, including her doctorate, where she studied with American composer, David Diamond. Her dynamic and eclectic catalog of work has earned many accolades, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, and, for her Violin Concerto No.1, the Juno Award for Classical Composition of the Year. A recent recording of her composition *The Ice is Talking* for percussion and electronics was named as one of the New York Times' Best Classical Music Albums of 2023.

Many of Fung's works are inspired by a deep interest in non-Western musical traditions. In 2012, for instance, she traveled to Yunnan Province, China, to document the disappearing musical traditions of remote mountain tribes of the region. Through travel and cultural immersion, she's written that these "traditional sources act as catalysts for my voice emerging from the shifting kaleidoscope of my own multicultural identity."

In Violin Concerto No. 1, Fung draws upon her experience studying and performing *gamelan* traditions of the islands of Java and Bali. *Gamelan* means "sounding together," and refers to an ensemble whose core instruments include gongs of various size and shape, as well as xylophone-like instruments with bronze keys. The bright sounds of these instruments shimmer in their resonance, the result of being tuned ever so slightly apart from one another. The texture of *gamelan* is richly distinctive in its complex interlocking layers of rhythm and melody. In Violin Concerto No. 1, Fung translates the textures and hypnotic rhythms beautifully for orchestra, and many of the melodies we hear are drawn from the distinct modes and scales of *gamelan*. A slow, stately melody played first on chimes quotes directly from *Puspawarna*, a Javanese court song meaning "Garlands of Flowers." Historically and today, the melody is associated with the entry of the prince. Each verse of the poetic text describes a different flower, and the way its color, scent, and form remind the prince of a favorite lover. In traditional performances of the piece, the *rebab*, a two-stringed bowed fiddle, richly elaborates the melody, just as the violin does in Fung's concerto.