

Doing the Butterfly almost 400 times

Violinist Lu Siqing will perform Butterfly Lovers, his first with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

Jan Lee

When acclaimed violinist Lu Siqing takes the stage on April 19 to perform the violin solo in the concerto Butterfly Lovers with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), it will be close to his 400th time performing it.

He first performed it when he was 18 and has since performed it in more than 10 countries.

China-born Lu, 43, who became the first Asian to win the prestigious Paganini Violin International Competition in 1987, says: "It's inevitable. I do get tired of playing the same piece so many times. However, I gain a different understanding of the piece at different stages of my life. Moreover, it's my job to inject new life into the piece whenever I play it."

Butterfly Lovers, about the tragic romance between Zhu Yingtai, a wealthy girl who pretends to be a boy in order to pursue her studies, and Liang Shanbo, the ordinary scholar she falls for, is the title piece of the orchestra's triple bill concert next week. The concert also features two other pieces - Centennial Memorial Of Xinhai and Yue Opera Dreams Of The Red Chamber Suite.

The orchestra's music director Yeh Tsung, 62, who will be conducting, says of the titular piece: "It touches on a universal theme of love until death and it is a very sophisticated piece which does not rely on vocals or lyrics for expression."

The orchestra last performed the piece in 2010. Lasting almost half an hour, it chronicles the tragic love story, which culminates in the lovers turning into a pair of butterflies upon their deaths. The piece

was composed by Chinese musicians He Zhanhao and Chen Gang in 1958.

Although Lu has never performed with the orchestra before, he has high hopes for the concert.

"I've heard many good things about the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, I have great confidence in them," he says in Mandarin over the telephone from Qingdao.

Also performing at the concert is Song Fei, a famed erhu player and daughter of Chinese erhu master Song Guosheng. She will be the soloist for the concert's second piece, Centennial Memorial Of Xinhai.

The concerto, composed by Kuan Nai Chung, the former music director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, debuted in 2011 for the 100th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution led by Sun Yat Sen, which overthrew the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China.

Song, 44, who has been called the queen of traditional Chinese music for being well versed in 13 traditional Chinese instruments, says that the piece is quite special.

The vice-president of the China Conservatory of Music says: "This piece is an epic. It chronicles a historical event and the vicissitudes of life."

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Book it

BUTTERFLY LOVERS

Where: SCO Concert Hall, 7 Shenton Way Singapore Conference Hall, Level 1

When: April 19, 8pm and April 20, 3 and 8pm

Admission: Tickets for April 19 and 20, 8pm shows are sold out. \$45 and \$55 tickets are still available for April 20, 3pm matinee

Info: Call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg



Queen of traditional Chinese music and erhu player Song Fei (left) and famed violinist Lu Siqing (right) will be performing at the Butterfly Lovers concert. PHOTOS: SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA