

Vivian Fung, Composer

“One of today’s most eclectic composers” – NPR

“Vivian Fung has attained the kind of success that is the result of a strong, not easily confined musical personality, redoubtable skill and technique, and a gift for building relationships with performers...There is an ever-present immediacy to her music, a sense of forward motion and often a visual narrative...Another factor of her staying power as a composer is undoubtedly her cultural inquisitiveness.” – *I Care if You Listen*

A Child Dreams of Toys

"Another work among the most enthralling heard on this stage all year long proved to be Vivian Fung's *A Child's Dream of Toys*, which bolted out of the gate with all the high-flying energy of a three-year-old — in fact, the piece was inspired by the Edmonton-born composer's own daughter. Kudos to Raiskin for holding all the explosive pieces together in this wild quilt of complex rhythms and constantly shifting timbres, as well as the fearless players for tackling its nail-biting challenges head-on." – *Winnipeg Free Press*

Biennale Snapshots

“The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra provided its customary quality and variety... with the world premiere of Vivian Fung's imaginative *Biennale Snapshots*.” – *Vancouver Classical Music*

"Vivian Fung was all they talked about when they left." – *The Georgia Straight*

Birdsong

“a fiercely contemporary program of unrelenting thorniness.” – *The LOG Journal*

“Vivian Fung's *Birdsong* set the tone, moving from glassy impressionism to a diabolically twittering reel and slashing accents, a hike through a minatory forest.” – *The Washington Post*

“From the first notes of Vivian Fung's *Birdsong*, Midori's effortless technique and silvery tone were evident. Also immediately evident was Jokubaviciute's role as confident and equal partner, rather than solely an accompanist. Fung's 2012 work, true to its name, had the violinist flitting the bow across the strings with subtlety and grace – this was not an ‘in your face’ Flight of the Bumblebee derivative.” – *Sequenza 21*

“Vivian Fung's *Bird Song* begins ornately with violin and piano waxing eloquently with the equivalent of a series of warbles. Things gradually get more robust, more mercurial and on it goes nicely, stirringly.” – *Classical Modern Music*

“This technically challenging composition is distinguished by complex runs, rhythmic passages, a rhapsodic nature and its improvisational elements. Birdcalls and other imitative sounds are noted in the opening and closing passages. They are picturesquely evoked with fluttering figures played both by violin and piano and are followed by more challenging episodes. The piece blends and contrasts the two instruments.” – *Classical Music Daily*

“Vivian Fung's *Birdsong* for Violin and Piano is a masterpiece of sonic partnering of these two instruments as well as a breathtaking tour de force for both, but especially for the violin.” – *Classics Today*

"Vivian Fung's *Birdsong* for Violin and Piano is a spirited tour de force with a wide range of both technical and musical virtuosity." – *I Care if You Listen*

"One marvels at the array of timbre these musicians produce, as in... the sheer technical wizardry the musicians produce in Vivian Fung's *Birdsong*." – *Chicago Tribune*

Clarinet Quintet: Frenetic Memories

"Vivian Fung's *Clarinet Quintet: Frenetic Memories*... not only bridged the space between a rural Chinese village and an urbane Canadian composer but also pulled the string instruments together to deal with a rambunctious clarinet. Vivian Fung was also present to describe her "a bit overwhelming" experience as a musical tourist in rural southern China. The struggle to process "many new sights, sounds, and experiences" came through vividly in her one-movement quintet, led by the clarinet in a frenetic dash from blinding staccato runs to foggy pianissimo to whistling multiphonics." – *New York Classical Review*

Concerto for Two Violins and String Orchestra

"It packs a powerful, virtuosic punch in its single, 15-minute-long movement: rustling with Fung's trademark nervous energy, slippery glissandi oozing up and down the strings as the soloists trade jabs of Baroque-ish harmonies and fragments of a plaintive, vaguely Eastern European-sounding melody. A chaconne section tries to impose some formal structure before the entire piece floats away and dissolves —poof! — at the end of an ascending scale." – *ARTSFILE*

Concerto For Harp

"In Vivian Fung's *Concerto for Harp*... Kibbey's bravura and sensitivity, especially in her cadenza, outlined the music's intriguing mix of timbres, thorny sonorities, wailing glissandos and chirping pizzicatos echoed in the strings. In between, amusing parodies of a waltz and tango lightened up the texture. The drums and other percussion joined in, giving zest and a shade of violence to the composition." – *The Washington Post*

Dust Devils

"Vivian Fung's *Dust Devils* sent squiggly melodic figures racing around the orchestra in an ebullient whirl"
– *San Francisco Chronicle*

"brief, colorful, snazzy scherzo for big orchestra where the dust devils were simulated by whirring strings."
– *Classical Voice North America*

"The new piece on the program, Vivian Fung's *Dust Devils*, could've been written for the occasion, considering how much its coloristic playfulness resembled passages in the Rachmaninoff symphony's middle movement. In fact, *Dust Devils* dates back to 2011, and lives up to its title with a lot of swirling musical activity and ominous underlying tension suggesting influences from the late Christopher Rouse. Canadian composer Fung is clearly a master of the orchestral medium, even if this particular piece, like real-life dust devils, is there and gone, leaving only fleeting ethereal memories." – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"The evening opened with Vivian Fung's *Dust Devils*, a single-movement piece inspired by the idea of emotional volatility. When Fung introduced the work, she explained that she delights in writing for orchestra partially due to its colorful palette. In this piece, the orchestra's different colors represented emotional and cerebral swirls. It culminated with a chorale in which the brass section demonstrated it was small but mighty."
– *San Francisco Classical Voice*

"*Dust Devils* is an atmospheric and evocative work.... The work vacillates from placid, peaceful moments to bombastic outcries" – *Classical Voice North Carolina*

"*Dust Devils* by Canadian composer Vivian Fung, is a taut, 10-minute classically structured creation in one movement divided into three sections: fast, slow and fast again. Fung effectively gives the sound motion and shape through rhythm and massing voices in the orchestra rather than by working with melodies or motifs. Composed in 2011 and revised three years later, *Dust Devils* is like a good abstract painting, where one can appreciate the techniques used in its composition. Fung is a clever orchestrator, using all sorts of subtle layering to achieve her effects." – *The Toronto Star*

"Saturday's concert began with Vivian Fung's short and delightful *Dust Devils*, a swirling inner journey with capricious sonorities, quicksilver moods, warbling winds and a big brass flourish — a work inventive and charming." – *Monterey Herald*

"*Dust Devils* 'is an exciting piece,' Oundjian says. 'It's full of wonderful colors and textures, and a thrill to listen to.'" – *Boulder Weekly*

"*Dust Devils* begins with bright, whirling sounds built from fragments and outbursts of sound that do indeed recall a progression of dust devils. A central section of static chords, marked by slowly changing colors and eerie wails rises to a clouded culmination in the brass. This entertainingly descriptive piece was played with verve and energy by the Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, who were all smiles at the end. So were many in the audience." – *Sharps and Flat Irons*

"While the other pieces relied on melody as their dominant element, *Dust Devils* went for visceral energy built from internal chaos. Fung isn't creating harmonic puzzles, leading the audience on a twisted path to a tonic chord, but rather inviting the audience into a psychological moment. The orchestra tackled the piece with a seriousness of intent. There's purposeful cacophony, sliding into an ominous quiet with undercurrents of movement like ants in a colony below the ground. The brass busted in like a giant's footsteps, as though to say 'we can handle this,' but the disquiet was never fully resolved, only ceased." – *KC Studio*

"The program began with *Dust Devils*, a strikingly original and exciting work by Canadian-born composer Vivian Fung. A better name for this work could not be chosen... Though only 10 minutes in length, the work offers a staggering variety of musical emotions, and, in three continuous movements, gives the impression of a symphony or other large-scale orchestral work...The overall impression is of balance and form, but with so much fun going on in between. Fung, the composer of more than 60 works, was present to step on stage and receive a well-deserved ovation." – *Broad Street Review*

"Thursday's concert started with Vivian Fung's *Dust Devils*. The ten minute piece has a three-part structure with a momentous beginning, strings playing fortissimo sul ponticello, combining with xylophone, glockenspiel, brass and timpani to drive the sound to a booming high point. Fung then pares down the sound to soft colors of flute, harp, and piano in the delicate middle section which builds to a vigorous finale. Maestro Nézet-Séguin's interpretation highlighted the complex orchestration which could be heard clearly in the Academy of Music's dry acoustics." – *Philly Life and Culture*

Earworms

"Fung's writing is highly organized and technically accomplished, but its immediate appeal is in its hip humour and unapologetic, in-your-face virtuosity... Familiar tunes get grotesquely distorted and amplified. It's fast, fun, and gives the orchestra plenty of meat to chew (the brass section gleefully went to town)." – *ARTS FILE*

"It's a wild and witty piece, in which fragments of music emerge, whirl around us, mutate, loop, transform. Some are original, some are quotations of famous works. Sometimes the orchestra seems to just give up, collapsing in on itself; sometimes it buzzes and leaps, finally reaching a powerful ending (and along the way giving Fung's son his bus wheels)." – *San Francisco Classical Voice*

"Fung's *Dust Devils* got its world premiere at last year's festival. Her toddler son provided the inspiration for *Earworms*, thanks to his insistent demand to sing *The Wheels on the Bus* over and over. Instead of trying to escape the "annoying" song she chose to incorporate it into what could be called a musical quiz because she sneaked into this colorful 11-minute piece quotes from any number of pieces that became earworms for her on their own. (Charles Ives' *The Unanswered Question* and Maurice Ravel's *La valse* were only two of many more.) Both the Lash and Fung pieces displayed glitzy compositional technique with tongue-in-cheek flair." – *Performing Arts Monterey*

Glimpses

"Fung emerges as a fully evolved compositional voice in this recording dominated by her Balinese-flavored 2011 Violin Concerto, but also in the Asian-flavored *Glimpses* for prepared piano (2006) that was expanded into her 2009 Piano Concerto 'Dreamscapes.' Her Violin Concerto... is in her own more intimate, often pensive, but frequently playful sound world, which indeed lives up to the album's title.... *Glimpses* is tuneful and fun – a quality not lost in the music's repurposing in the later Piano Concerto. At every point in the disc, Fung has a strong sense of thematic control and structural overview that suggests more great things to come." – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Kecak Attack!

"Vivian Fung's *Kecak Attack!* caught the audience off-guard, stringing together flailing pitch slides, whooping, and numerous characters of syllables, à la Meredith Monk. A lively and exacting performance by Polycoro kept the audience enthralled with the contrasting dynamic. With such contemplative music spanning the rest of the concert, the change of pace was delightful." – *I Care if You Listen*

Pot Roast a la RBG

"Vivian Fung's *Pot Roast à la RBG* has the most humor of all the included pieces. I'm not sure how many recipes have been converted into art song, but I hope this isn't the last one. This and "The Elevator Thief" from *The Long View* give us a private glimpse of RBG as a parent, as well as someone with a private life. The asides about activities in daily life and the familial inside jokes create some important relief between the heady Dickinson poem that precedes and the grave text by Martin Ginsburg that follows it." – *I Care if You Listen*

Shifting Landscapes

"Vivian Fung's *Shifting Landscapes* (Alberta) reminded the listener of a train chugging across the vast expanse of the prairies." – *Ontario Arts Review*

Sketch

"*Sketch* pitted the solo cello of Andrew Janss against electronic tones, loops and whooshes of sound, controlled by a stage left iPad. This fascinating experimental work showed the possibilities on the electronic frontier as the digitally generated sounds supported the cello but did not overwhelm it." – *SuperConductor*

String Quartet No. 3

"The characteristic qualities of Fung's music are efficiency and directness.... Her Third Quartet is about 10 minutes long, a single cycle that rises to explosions and distortions before returning to the crystalline shapes of

the opening. It is terrifically difficult, cutting on the edge of range and volume in parts and demanding wildly non-intuitive rhythms in others; it's also surprisingly affective." – *The Montreal Gazette*

String Quartet No. 4 "Insects and Machines"

"Inspired by the sounds of insects that buzzed around her on a walk in Cambodia, Fung merged those sounds with ambient city noise to create a tapestry of buzzing tremolos, shifting rhythms and swooping dynamics. It's a stream of consciousness that should repay rehearing." – *Aspen Times*

"Canadian-born Californian Vivian Fung tested the musicians' concentration with her new String Quartet No. 4, 'Insects and Machines', in its second performance after the musicians gave its debut in May. Inspired by the creatures that buzzed around her on a walk in Cambodia, Fung merged those sounds with ambient city noise to create a tapestry of restless tremolos, shifting rhythms and swooping dynamics — a stream of consciousness that should repay rehearing." – *Seen and Heard International*

Violin Concerto

"The Chinese Canadian composer Vivian Fung writes music infused with the sounds of Asian tradition – not (at least on this disc) China but Indonesia...they lend the music a welcome lyricism and grace. Yet the further Fung strays from that stylistic foundation, the more fascinating and rewarding her music becomes. The Violin Concerto that leads off the disc boasts a certain winsome charm.... To hear how much more Fung is capable of, go right to the final Piano Concerto.... Here at last is music of dramatic urgency and depth, in which Fung draws on ideas from gamelan while also adding plenty of her own original material – clangorous, dissonant harmonies, off-kilter rhythms and a sense of wild unpredictability." – *The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Indonesian gamelan music plays a major role in Fung's sound world. Her Violin Concerto employs harmonies more commonly found in traditional Asian music and tonalities reminiscent of bells being struck and stroked. It's a wild ride of a piece, and Lee was astounding throughout, coaxing all sorts of unexpected sounds from her violin as the music careened from high and haunting to rapid and raucous to shimmering to angry." – *The Pioneer Press*

Violin Concerto No. 2

"The piece was full of storm and drama, as winter can also be, with furious passages for the violin and resounding dense textures from the orchestra. By the end though, something had settled and winter had created a spell that for me was hard to leave once the applause broke out." – *The Whole Note*

"Fung's concerto creates a mystic sonic landscape of colors and atmospheres that transport the listener to an otherworldly place.... Fung's concerto is worthy of becoming a regular part of the standard concerto repertoire." – *Urban Milwaukee Dial*