

Israel Lai (2017)

Clash

for alto saxophone, violin, and piano

written for the Contrast Trio

Ensemble-in-Residence 2017/18, CUHK Department of Music

Clash is a study on placing the same element under different contexts. The piece is centred on the saxophone's concert B, which, when heard together with the violin and piano's vastly different but repeated chords, is heard as consonant or dissonant. The saxophone line then follows a path that attempts to resolve its dissonance relative to the other instruments, which ends up creating an interesting line on its own.

Clash is also a metrical metamorphosis: the first and final sections contain essentially the same materials, but while the music starts with alternating quadruple and quintuple meters, it is gradually transformed by the irregular middle section into alternating triple and compound duple meters. The listener is challenged to spot the difference since the first section has faded in his memory.

On multiple levels, this juxtaposition and conflict between a previous appearance of a certain piece of material, etched onto the listener's memory, and the nuanced transformation of the same material is what I call a *clash*.

Israel LAI Miu-yeung is a composer, arranger, piano accompanist, conductor, orchestral violinist, translator and hyperpolyglot from Hong Kong. He is currently a final-year undergraduate music student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, studying composition with Prof. Lee Wan-ki Wendy, Dr. Chan Kai-young, and Prof. Chan Wai-kwong Victor, and previously an exchange student at Lund University, Sweden.

Growing up in a Christian environment, Lai has served as pianist, assistant conductor and composer in residence at his church and made chamber arrangements of hymns, such as Christmas Suite (2016), as well as forays into the field of modernised Cantonese Christian music, such as Seven Last Words from the Cross (2018).

Lai is eager to explore ways of combining and incorporating different musical idioms inside one composition, from classical to modern to ethnic, from homogeneous to constantly changing. He is interested in a variety of instrumentations, especially woodwinds and large ensembles. Fascinated by large-scale classical forms, he has worked on his suite of Swedish Rhapsodies (2015-) for chamber orchestra and his Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (2015-2018).

On the chamber side, his Rondo (2017) for wind quintet was acclaimed at the premiere, and Introduction and Intermezzo (2017) was broadcast on radio at the finals of New Generation Hong Kong 2017 competition. He gained international exposure with his Theme and Variations (2017) at the highSCORE Festival, Italy, and his Winter (2017) in Taiwan. He is always open to new influences and inspirations, and is particularly interested in the applications of polytonality.