

Mini-festival event  
**CENTRAL CELEBRATES**



**ORCHESTRAS CENTRAL**  
Ngā Tira Pūoru o te Pokapū



**OCT Ensemble**

**Rupert D'Cruze**

*Conductor & Adjudicator*

**Michael Williams**

**Bjørn Arntsen**

*Adjudicators*

**ORCHESTRAS CENTRAL** presents

# COMPOSITION WORKSHOP



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

**SUNDAY 24 AUGUST, 10.00AM**

Te Whare Tāpere Iti  
Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts

# PROGRAMME

## NAU MAI,

From our Chief Executive  
**Catherine Gibson**

Many congratulations to the following composers whose works have been selected to be workshopped at today's session, in association with the University of Waikato.

It's particularly exciting to hear music coming to life for the very first time - being a part of the journey of a work from these outstanding young composers is a privilege for us here at Orchestras Central. We're proud to nurture emerging musicians at all stages in their journey, and wish them all the very best for their bright futures ahead.

**Secondary and tertiary winners will be announced at the end of the session.**

## THE ORIGINAL MUSIC

### SECONDARY STUDENTS

#### **STANLEY PETTENGILL**

Headland  
*Palmerston North Boy's High School*

#### **RILEY WANG**

Variations on a Theme by Chen  
*Liston College*

### TERTIARY STUDENTS

#### **TATIANA RIABINKINA**

Anei Mātou! Here We Are!  
*University of Canterbury*

#### **SHUCHEN GAO**

LuPan  
*University of Waikato*

#### **ADAM WHISKIN**

Taniwha's Den  
*Victoria University of Wellington*

#### **WAYNE GAO**

Nature Sketches  
*University of Auckland*

Today's composition workshop is proudly presented  
in association with the University of Waikato.

## THE PERFORMERS

### OCT ENSEMBLE

**LARA HALL** *Violin I*

**HARRIS LEUNG** *Violin II*

**LISA LYNCH** *Viola*

**ROS OLIVER** *Cello*

**RUPERT D'CRUZE**

*Conductor & Adjudicator*

**MICHAEL WILLIAMS**

**BJØRN ARNTSEN**

*Adjudicators*

*University of Waikato*

The professional **OCT Ensemble** is one of the four orchestras managed by **Orchestras Central** alongside community orchestras **Trust Waikato Symphony Orchestra** and **Rusty Player Orchestra**, and the upcoming stars of tomorrow, **Youth Orchestra Waikato**. OCT Ensemble reimagines what classical music can be in the 21st Century through combining art forms, pushing boundaries and collaborating with dynamic artists.

**Rupert D'Cruze** is the Principal Conductor Emeritus of Trust Waikato Symphony Orchestra (TWSO) and has led Orchestras Central's conductor training programme. He has conducted the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, South German Radio Symphony Orchestra, North Hungarian Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy. In the 1990's he was Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Huddersfield Philharmonic Orchestra and also Musical Director of the Portsmouth Festival Choir. Rupert's work as a guest conductor in New Zealand includes with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, Manukau City Symphony Orchestra and the St Matthews Chamber Orchestra.

*With grateful thanks to Bjørn Arntsen for recording the workshop today.*  
[www.bjornarntsen.com](http://www.bjornarntsen.com)

# COMPOSERS

Secondary Student

## STANLEY PETTENGILL **Headland**

Headland – a narrow piece of land that projects from a coastline into the sea.

Overlooking the sweeping Auckland Harbour is “Musick Point.” A striking headland found at the end of Buckland’s Beach peninsula. Standing atop the cliff face, one can easily become lost in both the beauty and sparse grandeur of the landscape. Headland aims to capture this interplay between nature’s fragile poise and uncontained vastness – the quiet elegance of the land meeting the weight and energy of the open sea. Through shifting textures, and dramatic shifts in character, the piece seeks to reflect on this contrast between beauty and majesty. Inviting the listener to inhabit a moment of still observation, where sound mirrors the layered, unique beauty of Aotearoa.

Headland offers a musical depiction of the natural beauty of “Our Place – Aotearoa”. The piece functions to embody the sweeping landscape and drama of nature – specifically the unique elegance of New Zealand. Growing up in Auckland, I recall being enraptured by the view from “Musick Point” upon visiting the place with my father. My hope is that the piece can capture this same feeling of awe and wonder that I was able to experience.

Stanley Pettengill is a Year 13 student studying music and composition at Palmerston North Boys’ High School. A member of many local ensembles such as the Manawatu Youth Orchestra and Sinfonia, the Manawatu Concert Band, and the PNBHS Stage Band, Stanley has fostered a deep appreciation for both classical and jazz traditions. In 2025, he was awarded first place in the SGCNZ/Morrison Trust Shakespeare Composition Competition Instrumental Category, and as a result has been selected as student composer for the National Shakespeare’s School’s Production. Stanley views composition as a way to deepen his understanding of music and develop an outlet for personal expression. He intends to pursue tertiary study in composition to continue developing his voice as a composer.

Secondary Student

## RILEY WANG **Variations on a Theme by Chen**

A testament to the integration of Chinese immigrants into New Zealand society, this work explores themes of tension, identity and self-discovery through the transformation of a theme written by a personal friend of mine – who is also Chinese-Kiwi. Throughout this piece, the theme undergoes various forms of dissonance, tension and uncertainty, speeding eventually embracing them to end with a joyous flourish that is subtly unresolved – a suggestion of what is to come rather than a conclusion.

## RILEY WANG *Variations on a Theme by Chen* cont.

As soon as my friend Kathy Chen wrote this melody, I knew I wanted to extend it further – with my interpretation on it. Kathy and I are both Chinese-Kiwi, and the style she wrote this melody in is distinctively Western, a testament to how she also calls Aotearoa home.

As a first-generation immigrant, who came to settle in Aotearoa at the age of four. At this time, I was in internal turmoil. I didn't have any friends, barely understood English, and was conflicted in my identity. Did I really belong here? Gradually, I acclimated, yet there was still this tension in my identity. My family was different. Apparently, I had an accent. The lunch I brought was different.

The first few variations try encapsulate this feeling of tension. Initially 'agitato,' then more subtly. The main theme appears throughout the middle, slower variations as a call and echo, yet the variations are so short that the question often hangs unanswered. The sixth variation, however, depicts my experiences in high school. Inspired by Ligeti, this variation demonstrates my tumultuous experience dealing with racism, contrasting values between my conservative, Eastern parents and relatively progressive friends, and my own sexuality, once again ending on a question mark. The seventh variation served as an answer of sorts, finally finding a clear tonal centre as a ray of hope and understanding. Though there is still dissonance, it was embraced (especially at the vivace section), similar to how I gradually came to embrace my identity as someone who can be Chinese and Kiwi at the same time, being proud of my heritage as well as the place I truly call home. Though the end was holistically joyous, it did end on a tritone followed by a D5 dyad. Not quite a question however, but more so a suggestion; a suggestion as to what comes next – with Aotearoa as my home, a place of belonging.

Riley Wang is a year 12 student from Liston College. Some previous achievements include NZQA Outstanding Scholarship in Music Composition (2024), northern region winner in the 2025 NZCT Contest, and first place in the instrumental category at the 2024 SGCNZ competition. He is passionate about all kinds of music making, including conducting, performing on French horn, and especially composition. His initial introduction to composition was doodling on notation software while bored during maths class, being inspired by the YouTube score videos of music he was playing in school band. Over time, composition has become an important part of his life, both as a hobby and as a creative outlet to express what words cannot.

### Tertiary Student

## TATIANA RIABINKINA *Anei Mātou! Here We Are!*

The string trio Anei mātou! Here We Are! celebrates the spirit of belonging and identity in Aotearoa. This piece expresses a joyful, grounded presence—musicians playing not to impress, but to connect, celebrate, and have fun together. Its playful tone and freedom reflect the openness, diversity, and creative energy that define our place in Aotearoa.

## TATIANA RIABINKINA *Anei Mātou! Here We Are!* cont.

It is a celebration of the musicians who bring it to life, right here and now. This piece doesn't demand meticulous attention to every tiny detail, but it does call for a strong sense of musicality. It's meant for players who have nothing to prove—they already are exceptional musicians. Now, they can just have fun and feel like rockstars! No more good boys and girls—just music filled with charm, irony, and the occasional burst of chaos. A few imperfections are perfectly okay. We don't have to be flawless—what matters is the joy we find in the journey.

Tatiana Riabinkina is a Christchurch-based composer, performer, and educator whose work spans classical, jazz, film, electronic, and contemporary genres. A member of the Composers Association of New Zealand, she has received several composition awards. Tatiana is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts at the University of Canterbury, focusing on music and international cultural dialogue. Her music has been performed internationally, and she has worked on numerous film scores. As a multi-instrumentalist, she performs widely and contributes actively to the Christchurch music scene.

### Tertiary Student

## SHUCHEN GAO *Swell for Piano Trio*

This string quartet responds to *Our Place – Aotearoa* by exploring a personal sense of belonging through cross-cultural musical language. Drawing from ancient Daoist melodic aesthetics and reimagined within a Western chamber format, the work reflects my experience as a Chinese composer living in Aotearoa, and how Eastern philosophical ideas—such as harmony with nature and inner stillness—can find resonance within the spiritual and multicultural landscape of this place.

The quartet is based on musical material from *Lu Pan*, an opera currently in development. Inspired by traditional Daoist music, the work explores ideas of stillness, emptiness, and natural balance—core principles in Daoist philosophy. The melodic writing and harmonic construction are intended to evoke a sense of inner calm and equilibrium, rather than to create momentum or dramatic tension. Subtle variations in texture and tone replace overt contrasts. This piece reflects the composer's attempt to embody Daoist aesthetics within a Western chamber format, offering a meditative response to the theme *Our Place – Aotearoa*.

Shuchen Gao is a Chinese composer currently pursuing a PhD in music composition at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. His research and creative practice focus on cross-cultural music theatre, particularly the integration of Chinese philosophical and musical traditions with Western operatic forms. Shuchen draws on elements from Taoist music, Chinese classical literature, and traditional vocal aesthetics to develop a hybrid language in contemporary music. His recent works include chamber opera scenes, string quartets, and choral writing that reflect both Eastern spiritual ideals and modern dramatic structures. His practice is grounded in a strong belief in music as a bridge between worlds—cultural, historical, and spiritual.

Tertiary Student

## ADAM WHISKIN *Taniwha's Den*

*Taniwha's Den* encapsulates Aotearoa's unique culture and vibrant landscapes. The Taniwha are a cornerstone of Māori mythology, familiar to New Zealanders of all backgrounds and often woven into local stories and culture. They are said to have shaped much of the land, including Wellington harbour, and dwell in our oceans, rivers, and caves. This piece draws on these legends, bringing together the many elements that shape the spirit of 'our place, Aotearoa'.

*Taniwha's Den* evokes the dwelling of the mythological sea creatures known as Taniwha—beings both feared and revered in Māori legend. The piece explores their dual nature: at once fearsome, predatory monsters and protective guardians. The turbulent A section captures sailors unwittingly trespassing into the Taniwha's domain, with the sinuous shadow of its serpentine form gliding beneath the surface, violent waves tossing the boat, and the looming threat of the wild beast in pursuit. In contrast, the grandiose B section depicts the Taniwha's role as a guardian, embodying awe-inspiring power. These two themes interweave throughout the piece, the recurring menace of the A section reminding us that guardianship commands respect and caution.

Adam is a Wellington-based composer who writes music for solo instruments, chamber groups, orchestra, film, and electronic media. His works have been performed by the NZ String Quartet and ensembles at the NZ School of Music, and one of his pieces was professionally published through the IRMT's Trickier Tunes for Tamariki. He has received awards such as the Emerging Composer Award at the IRMT Youth Music Festival, the HVAO Composer Cup at the Hutt Valley Performing Arts Competition, and first place in the 2024 Around the Globe Music Festival Piano Composition Competition. Adam also supports emerging musicians by teaching and accompanying musicians of all ages and backgrounds. He currently studies Cell Biology at Victoria University of Wellington.

Tertiary Student

## WAYNE GAO *Nature Sketches*

Movement One: *Agapanthus*

*Agapanthus* draws inspiration from the painting *Agapanthus* by French artist Claude Monet. The development of the movement is through unraveling the complexity of the artwork, as the Impressionistic nature of the painting conveys ambiguity and the blurry essence of the art. The impressionistic aesthetics of the painting are explored through the ambiguity of tonality and pulses. The contrasting timbres between the different instruments present the harmonic and rhythmic interests that gradually unfold throughout the composition.

## WAYNE GAO *Nature Sketches* cont.

### Movement Two: *Moonlight*

Moonlight is a sonic exploration that portrays the beauty of lumination from the moon and the relentless gravitational pulls of the moon. The moonlight attracts the audience into its graceful and delicate luminosity where the dark forces of the moon gradually emerge to consume its audience. The unsettling atmosphere in the music persists throughout the entire movement which creates the dark undertones that remain unsolved by the end of the composition.

Both movements within the work can be seen as portraits of the beautiful and awe-inspiring natural scenes here in Aotearoa. The expressive nature of the work conveys a deep appreciation for the magnificent place that we all live in.

Wayne Gao is a composer, conductor, and musician dedicated to the expressive power of contemporary and classical music. A SOUNZ Composer, CANZ member, and NZSO Conducting Fellow, his works span a variety of orchestral and chamber works which have been performed by the NZSO, OCT Ensemble, and Lithuania's St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra.

His orchestral piece Azathoth will premiere with the NZSO at the 2025 Todd Young Composer Awards under the mentorship of Ryan Youens. In 2024, he conducted the premiere of his string work *A Nightingale in the Darkness* with the NZSO, later performed in Lithuania, where it was awarded the Special Prize by the Lithuanian Music Information Center. His earlier work, *Cosmic Dance*, was also featured at the 2023 Todd Awards with mentorship from Leonie Holmes. As a conductor, Wayne is currently a Conducting Fellow with the NZSO under the guidance of mentors Hamish McKeich and James Judd, and will assist Gemma New in NZSO's 2025 rehearsals for Mahler's Sixth Symphony.

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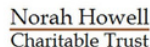
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