

7 Oct 2022

St Andrew's Church Wickford

Talk with composer/artistic director

Ho Wai-On

aka Ann-Kay Lin

Conversing with Rev'd Jonathan Evens



1

I HAD A DREAM

As a small child I dreamt I was on the cross.

I asked to be taken to church.

I believe in God.

It was a miracle for me to become a professional musician.

2



BACKGROUND

Grew up in British Hong Kong.

A natural for performing on stage as a child: dance, sing, play the piano, deliver speech & draw...

No proper training in any of the above yet wanted to be in the arts.

3

MIRACULOUSLY

an ill-prepared applicant

won a UK Scholarship to study

at the

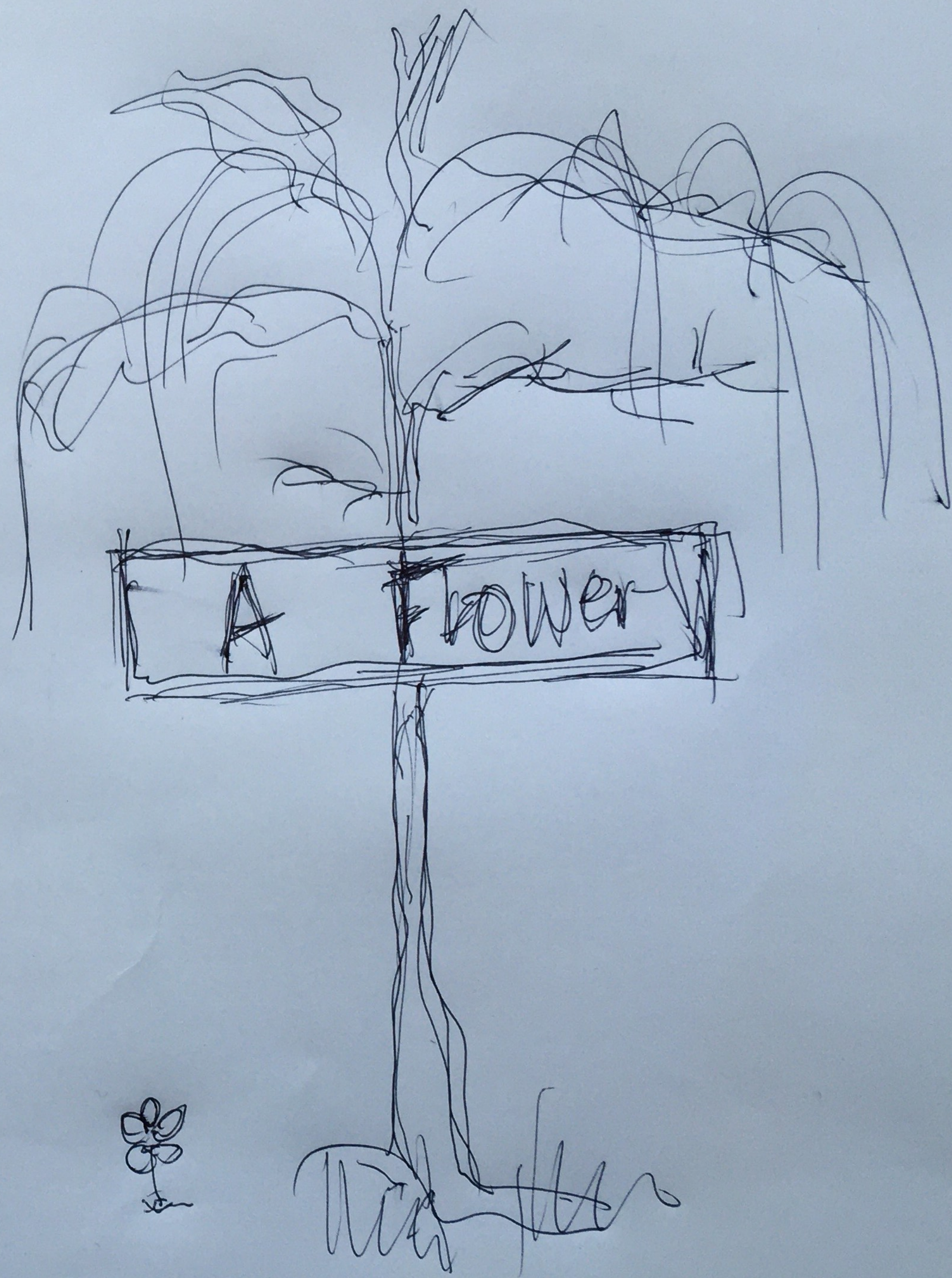
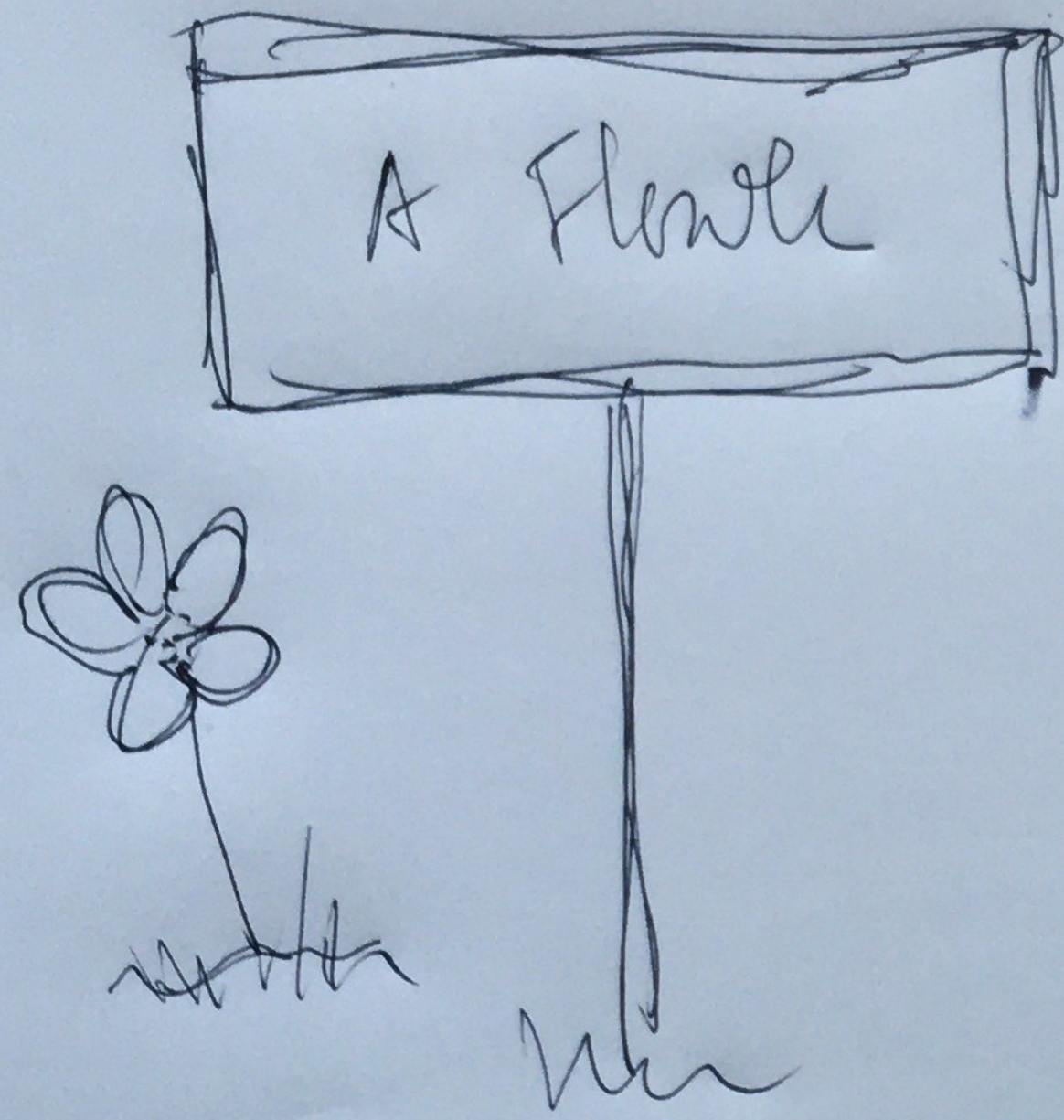
Royal Academy of Music, London

4a

NEVER THE ACHIEVER

**Works have been performed
in Britain & abroad since 1974.
Feel privileged to have worked
with many talented professionals.
Yet all through my career
it's like the following drawing...**

4b



I planted a flower... yet it's the plant label that flourishes into a tree

5

IT SEEMED TO BE THE END

**My dream was to become
a concert pianist.**

**While working on a recital
program I hurt my wrist
and was not able to play
the piano.**



6

UNEXPECTED COMPOSER

I wrote some music as a child.

Music teacher amazed.

I didn't think much of it –

I wanted to perform.

After hurting my wrist

I retrained as a composer

7a

FIRST PERFORMANCE

The Waves

Written for the London Saxophone Quartet

during my first year of retraining,

based on a tune I kept hearing in my head.

Later wrote a piano version for HK performances.

Hear this tune in the following video...

7b

THE WAVES music video

Images from videos by me & Ben Rector

(for 7b: The Waves from 0:15 to 0:46)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVqcsevD2lw>



8a

FIRST COMMISSION

Sakura (Cherry Blossoms) Variations

for cello & harpsichord

on the traditional Japanese folk song

Commissioned by harpsichordist Yuriko Ota

Quasi Japanese-Baroque

Performed at many London venues

8b

SAKURA VARIATIONS clip 1

Theme & Variation 1

Baroque (to 0:21): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQiBlb_kIT8



(For 8b: SKR to 4:17): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArJMfPjk-L0>

8c

SAKURA VARIATIONS clip 2
Using Japanese pentatonic
& reason for making this video
(for 8c: SKR Var 5 from 11:29)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArJMfPJK-L0>





9a
CHINESE PENTATONIC
“Pentatonic Study”
for 2 pianos,
for Helen & Eleanor Wong
to perform in Guangdong
China

Vaughan Williams Larks Ascending (to 1:05)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU-1zqUo80U>

9b

SWAN BEAUTY clip 1
based on Pentatonic Study

(for 9b clip 1: SB - 0:15 to 1:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8eNKvA8AIQ>



9c

SWAN BEAUTY clip 2

Swans, beautiful, graceful... yet with surprises

(for 9c clip 2: SB - 4:40 to 5:56)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8eNKvA8AIQ>



10

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING KILLS INSTINCT

I love Western Classical music

yet what I heard as a child &

my lack of proper training before the RAM

made me find professional training not helping

me to find my own voice in composition

11a

YOU HEAR NO HO WAI-ON IN THIS PIECE

**I promised to write my goddaughter
a piano piece for her birthday.**

She demanded “Classical” music.

**Then on my birthday she treated me
to the Chelsea Flower Show.**

The following video is about this.

11b

BIRTHDAY WITH CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

The music my goddaughter wanted me to write :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciPGzIAuNuA>



12a

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 1

**Seeing Stockhausen in concerts & talks
made me venture into electro-acoustics.**

**I spent 10 years working in this field at:
West Sq (London) – Stanford U – Cardiff U etc.**

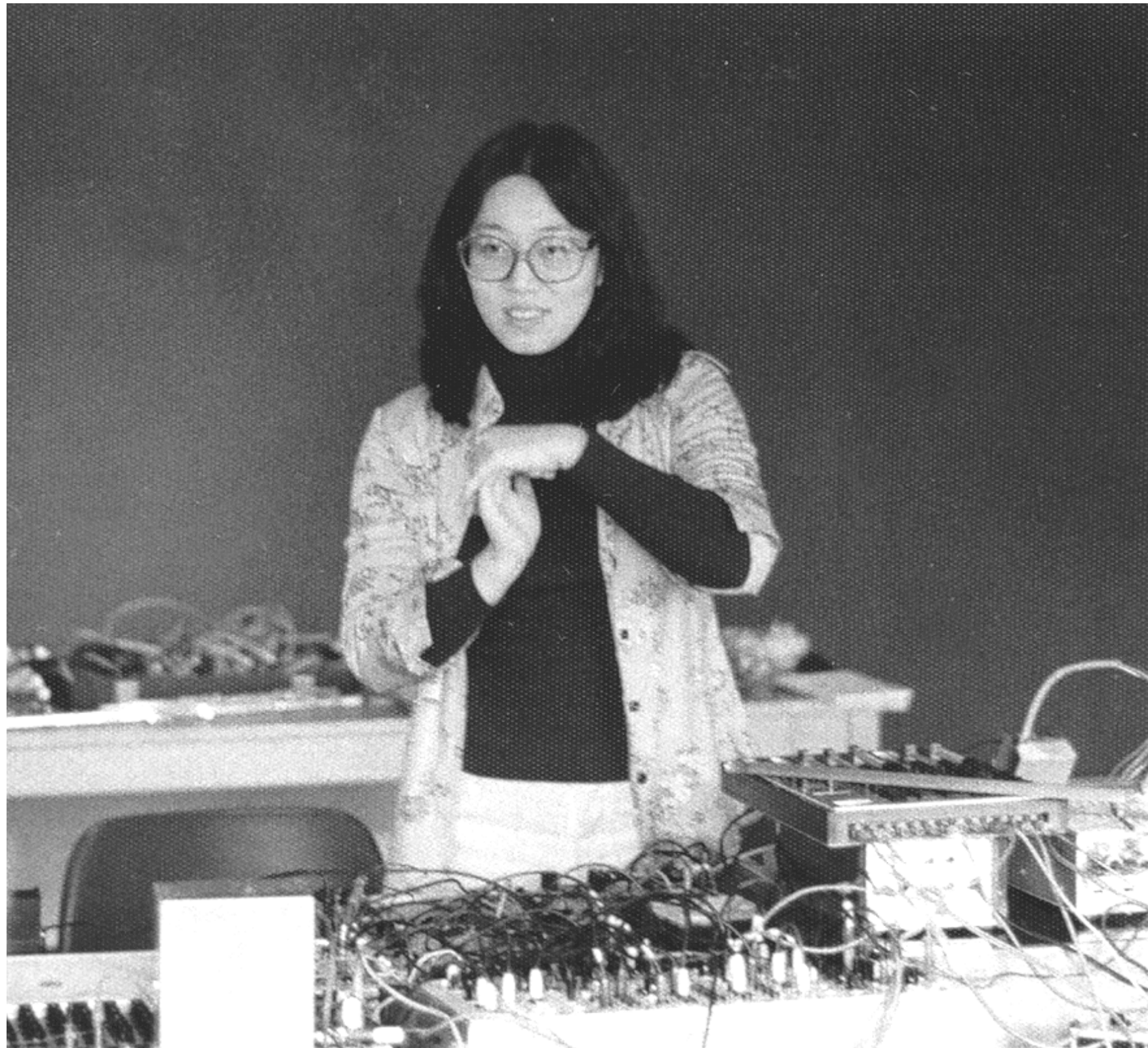
**Apart from creating electro-acoustic music,
the exposure affected my written music**

12b

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 2

At Dartington & Stanford U

The following is an electro-acoustic music video



12c

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 3

RADIOTHERAPY FUN music video

A video to express my experience:

“ In this cool and big room

Alone with the big machine

A voice from the speaker tells me to keep still

I wait for the ray gun

to deliver the magic bullets...

Praying they will hit the target ”

12d

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 4

about RADIOTHERAPY FUN music video

**I used numbers to generate all the sound
then enriched with analogue music equipment**

I animated computer graphics:

Round images to signify cancer cells;

Polygonal images to signify the radiotherapy

12e

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 5

RADIOTHERAPY FUN music video

(for 12e: Radio Fun – 0:20 to 2:00)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNI3-cuTzvs>



AD LIB

GUITARIST L.H. GLISS BETWEEN 16th & 36th FRETS ACCORDING TO THE CURVE LINE WHILE R.H. PLUCKS RAPIDLY, LOUDER WHEN THE NOTES GETTING HIGHER AND SOFTER WHEN THE NOTES GETTING LOWER

REHEARSALS: GUITARIST COUNTS ALOUD BEFORE PLAYING EACH CURVE

ARCO
PIZZ
SUL PONT

GUITAR AD LIB: TEMPO COMODO
(NOT SLOWLY)

OVERHIT WITH THUMB

VIOLA
♩ = 60
CON SORDINO, SEMPRE PP

12f

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 6

Affecting my written music

An example of using my own notation to express unusual sound I heard in my head:

3:10AM score

The following video is what this sounds like:

12g

ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS 7

3:10AM music video clip

(for 12g: 3:10AM video from “with distorted imagery like barriers)

<https://youtu.be/TeTXnTxTFHk>



CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 1

As a small child in Hong Kong, my first love was Cantonese opera that reached the lower classes, including those shunned by society – the poor, the illiterate, beggars, prostitutes, gangsters... bringing them enjoyment and culture, and I lived among these people as a child. Performers had diehard fans but were also looked down upon because of their profession. At the time, it was at its most cross-cultural and multimedia – anything goes for survival, and could be vulgar.

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 2

When I was about ten, while roaming free on the streets I befriended a beggar boy about my age. He sometimes put his hand into my jacket pocket to see if there was anything there for him. He was unusual because he was Eurasian. In colonial Hong Kong, ethnic Europeans were usually well off and occupied good positions. They did not mix with local Chinese much, let alone beggars...

I sometimes saw a pregnant woman begging on a nearby street. The beggar boy told me that she was his mother. He told me that all his relatives were beggars, though they never acknowledged one other on the street... He never mentioned his father. Perhaps his mother worked as a prostitute, and the boy was the issue of a drunken GI or marine, commonly seen on the streets when their ship visited Hong Kong. To be the son of a beggar woman who also prostituted to “devil men” – the Cantonese term for Westerners – would make my friend the lowest of those shunned by society. Yet he knew Cantonese opera via the omnipresent radio broadcasts, the open-air and other street performances accessible to all.

13c

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 3

Video clip of a performance

(for 13c - Clip 王凡石My PhD-Presentation-BIBAC-for presentation-clip.mp4)

In AV Folder



13d

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 4

Characteristic big leaps in the melody in the above Cantonese opera performance clip influenced the melody of “Heroine Song” I wrote to express my cancer experience:

**“ I sustain a smile in company,
my demeanour is courageous,
my condition, not contagious,
yet you who spoke of love have flown,
I am left to groan and moan,
alone, all alone...”**

13e

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 5

Audio of Heroine Song

**Melodic shape influenced by what I heard
in the previous Cantonese opera performance clip**

(for 13e - My PhD-Presentation-BIBAC-for presentation- score & audio .mp3)
In AVFolder

Cantonese Opera Gospel Songs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANE4YfqFTxl>

13f

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 6

**I was fascinated by the percussion in Cantonese opera
I like to use percussion in my music (when affordable)
BUDDHA SONG music video is an example**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wyX9rAxoLE>



13g

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 7

What I saw influenced my stage & costume design and direction when staging Handel's "Acis & Galatea" as a dance-opera for HKAPA

See the following example

Acid & Galatea Overture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVzMBUjbEIY>

13h

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 8

ACIS & GALATEA as a dance-opera

Long colourful ribbons on costumes for the nymphs and Galatea are reminiscent of a type of Cantonese opera costume (image L) that looks good with dance movements.



13h

CANTONESE OPERA INFLUENCE 8

**I staged Handel's
"ACIS & GALATEA" as
colourful 'big drama' –
this is what Cantonese
opera is literally called
in Cantonese.**

**L: Love scene, Acis and
Galatea inside heart-
within-heart.**



14a

INTER ARTES 1

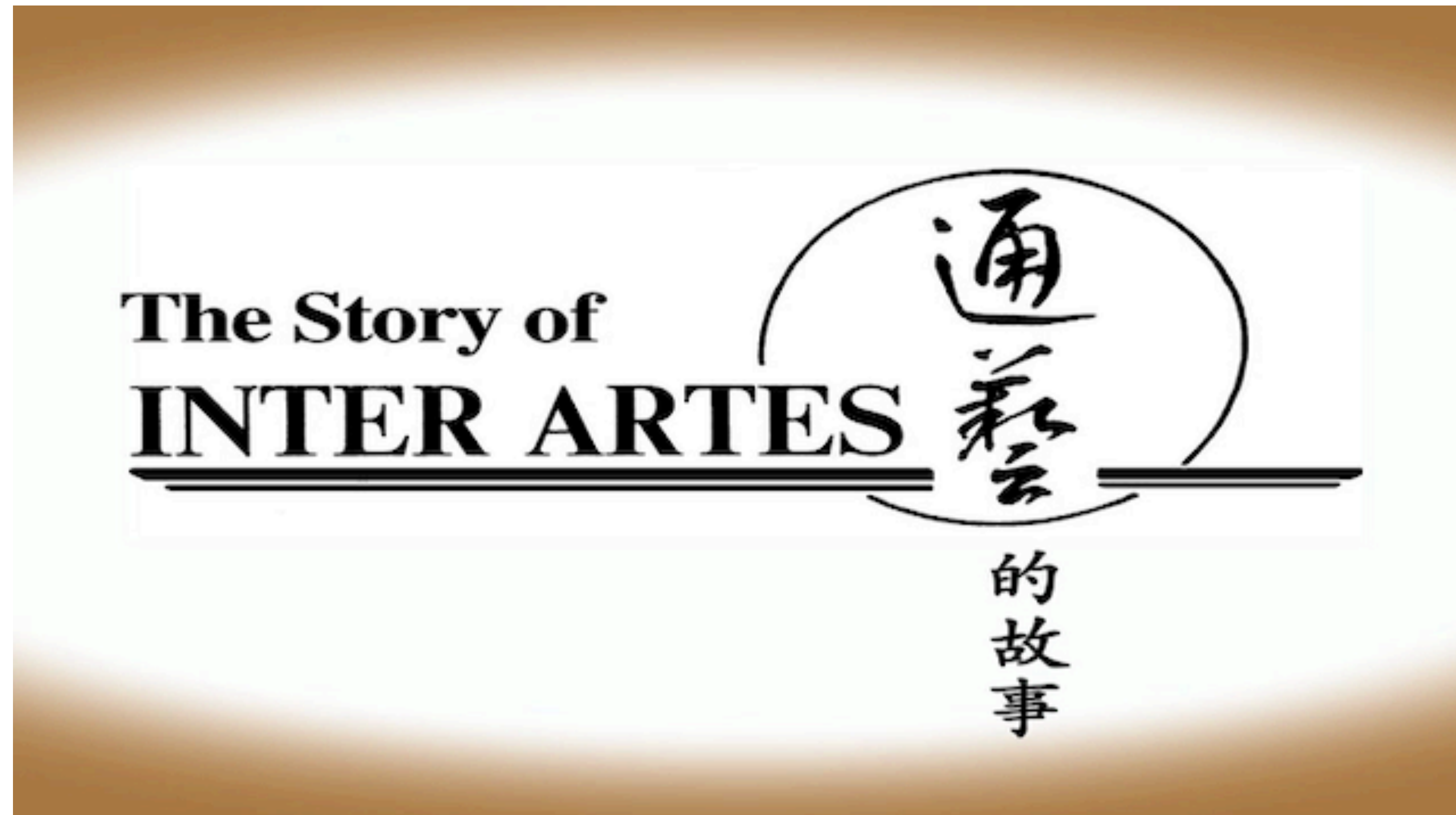
Living most of my life in the UK, I have come across all sorts of assumptions about ethnic Chinese people, and not necessarily from English people. Assumptions are more difficult to tackle than prejudice, as racial prejudice would stand out and be recognised as a personality flaw, while assumptions are so widespread and unnoticed that most people are not even aware that they have them. I also noticed some unnecessary barriers between art forms. I formed Inter Artes as a flexible force to create and performed works/projects that combined music, dance, drama & visual arts across different cultures to promote greater understanding between people and the arts, with initial funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation.

14b

INTER ARTES – INTER ARTES YUENLIN

The Story of Inter Artes video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d0TFMDHdPU&t=50s>





15

MUSIC IS HAPPINESS

Please take a free copy

After surviving cancer for the 2nd time I produced this CD of my music, with a 64-page book written and designed by me containing related stories, poems and more than 200 illustrations (book cover designed by Albert Tang).

16a

SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME CANCER SURVIVOR 1

After surviving cancer for the 3rd time, I felt too unwell to stage performances. I obtained an MBF award to work on a creative PhD about using the concept of Cantonese opera to create multi-venue performances. The creative core is a libretto-cum-script called “*Song & Dance of a 3-Time Cancer Survivor*”, with production ideas.

16b
**SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME
CANCER SURVIVOR 2**

My PhD poster

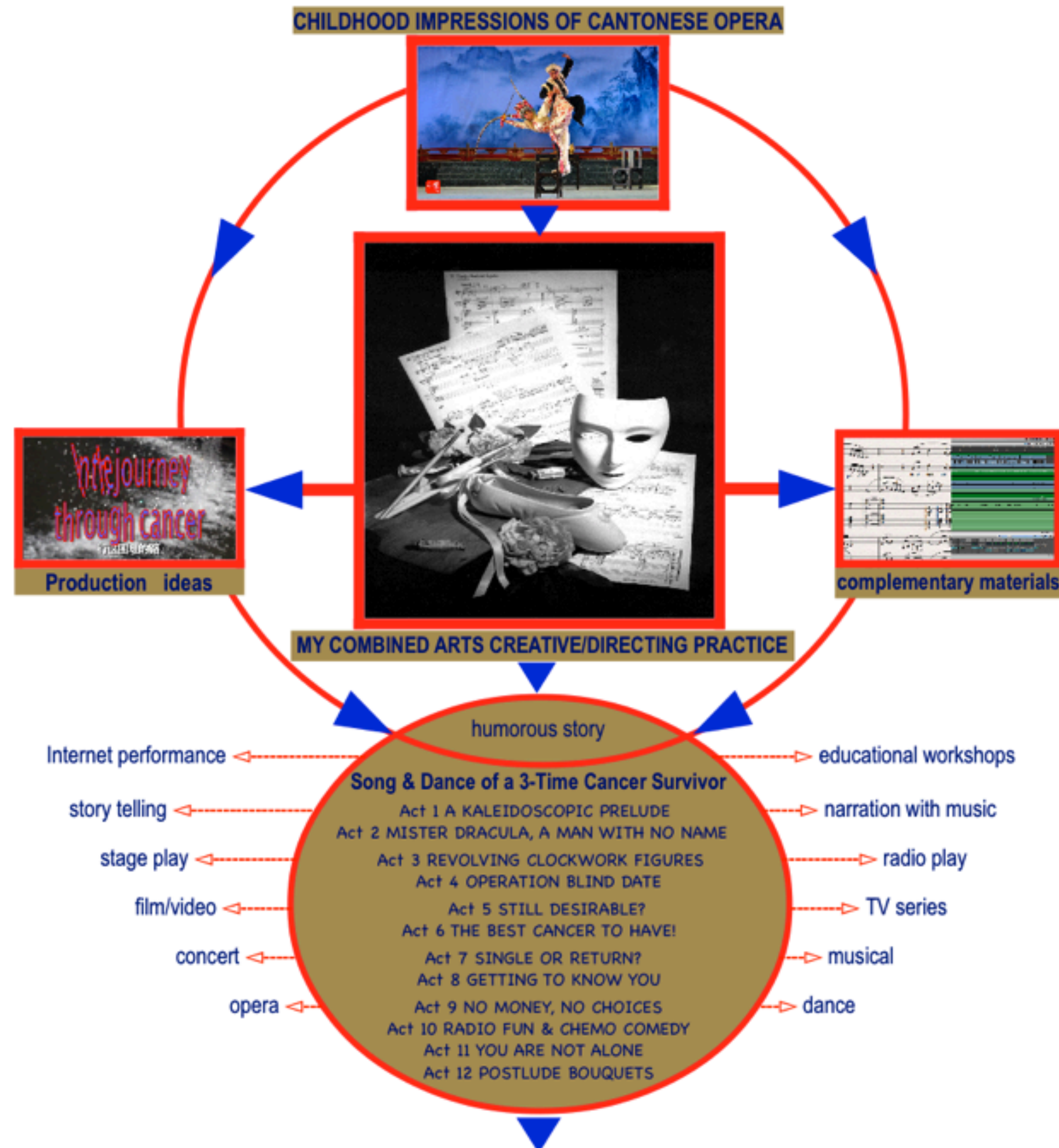
Showing:

Elements involved

12 acts libretto-cum-script

And potential

Multi-venue performances



Elements provided in the prototype are like pieces in a kaleidoscope, the possibilities are endless

SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME CANCER SURVIVOR 3

Years before the Hong Kong upheavals, I wrote in my thesis: During my childhood, Hong Kong was divided into three main areas: the city – Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula; the villages – the New Territories with old world charm, where villagers still cultivated fields in primitive ways; and many less populated or uninhabited offshore islands. From time to time I stayed in a village for short periods. In the early evenings, elderly villagers relaxed in a small open-air flat area surrounded by stones, telling stories of the past. An old and illiterate village woman once told me a legend about a tiny turtle crawling slowly on the seabed around the outer circumference of Hong Kong: when it finally completed the full circle, Hong Kong would sink to the bottom of the sea. Perhaps the legend could be interpreted as a metaphor for the fast change and disappearance of many aspects of Hong Kong culture, in the absence of an oral tradition to pass them on. This PhD thesis is a narrative of things disappearing, and a creative intervention that enables them to continue in a new form rather than sinking to the bottom of the sea.

17a

MAKING MUSIC VIDEOS FOR THE INTERNET 1

All videos are experiments and preparation for realizing
SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME CANCER SURVIVOR for the Internet

My 1st music video

MAGIC BANYAN TREE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX4ipdb-3Qw>



17b

Making MUSIC VIDEOS FOR THE INTERNET 2

With no funding, making videos is like the “Red Tomato & Green Pepper” TV show, but very time-consuming.

I use photos and video clips given to me that have nothing to do with my music or my project as raw material. It is very time-consuming to select so many unrelated images and modify them into what can be related to my music and project, and to form a compositional structure.

I HAVE A REGRET

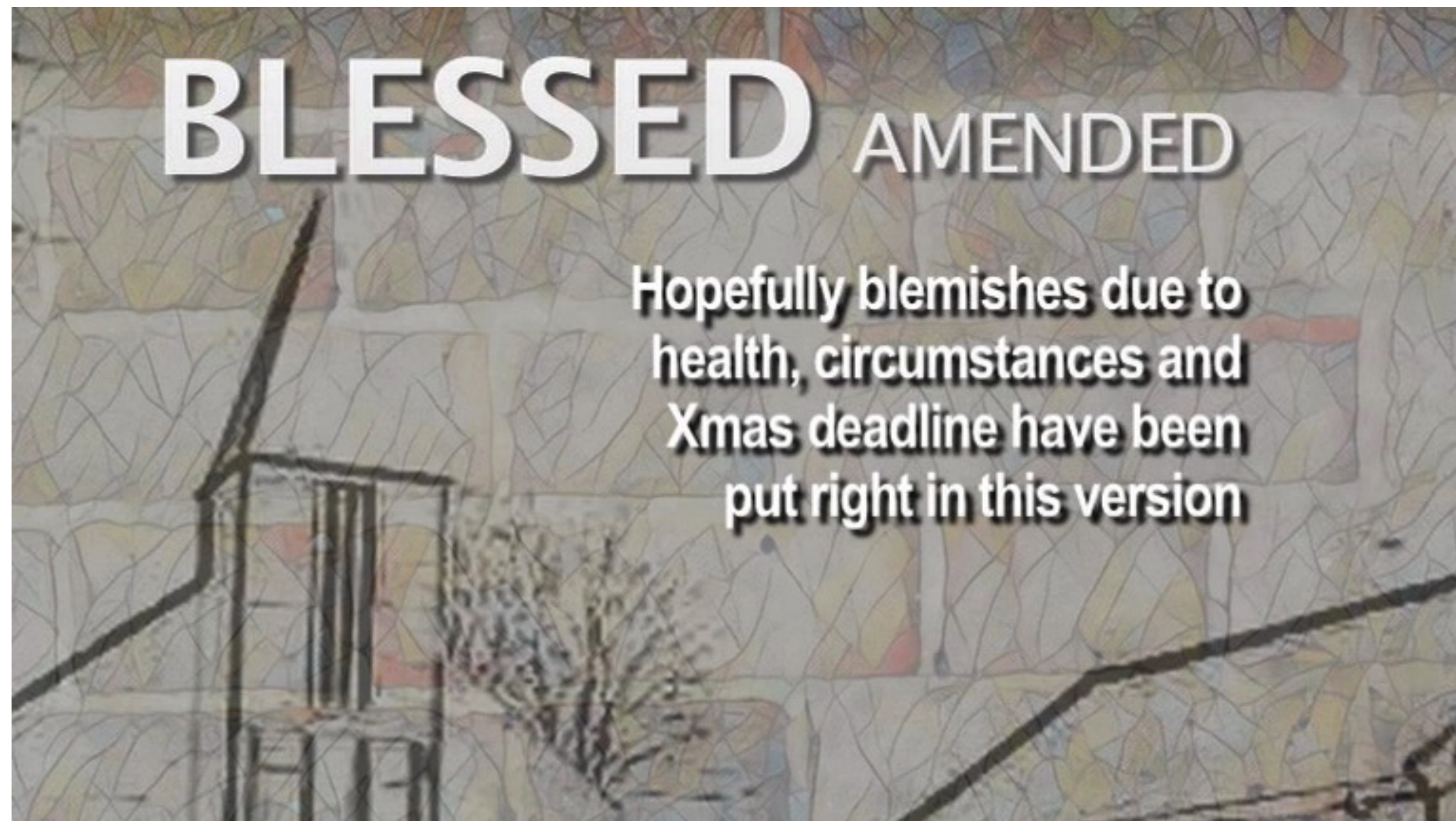
I usually only write music when commissioned, as that guarantees at least one performance. I have not had commission of large scale work though I have written a few. E.g., while waiting for a major cancer operation I wrote two works for symphony orchestra to take my mind off. On the left is one page of a 72-page orchestral work and will take a lot of time to make a convincing synthesised performance. SONG & DANCE OF A 3-TIME CANCER SURVIVOR and INTER ARTES YUENLIN are not commissioned.

19

**I WANT TO HEAR “BLESSED” FOR ST ANDREW'S
AS IF IN A CATHEDRAL**

(for 19 – BLESSED Amended)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARxhVkZhcDs&t=21s>



THANK YOU

website

<https://www.howaion.co.uk/>

YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/AKLHWO>

Please take a free copy of Music is Happiness