

canadianstage30 seasons

"Touching, endearing and witty"

- THREE WEEKS EDINBURGH

★★★★★ *"(A) euphoric assault on the senses... must experience"*

- BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

"A show for the musically adventurous... a constant delight. It only whets our appetite for Kong Kie's next Canada-Macau collaboration, Picnic in the Cemetery."

- THE GLOBE AND MAIL (on *Mr Shi and His Lover*)

Canadian Stage presents the North American Premiere of

Picnic in the Cemetery

Created by Njo Kong Kie

A Music Picnic & Point View Art Production

A Canadian Stage Berkeley Street Company in Residence

On stage April 26 – May 6 at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre

Toronto, ON – Concluding their sweeping, multidisciplinary 30th anniversary season on a lyrical and meditative note, Canadian Stage presents the North American premiere of composer **Njo Kong Kie's** first production in his Berkeley Street residency at Canadian Stage, [*Picnic in the Cemetery*](#) is on stage **April 26 – May 6** at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre.

This first residency production follows the critically acclaimed run of *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (co-created with playwright Wong Teng Chi), which first premiered at the SummerWorks performance Festival in 2016, ran in the Tarragon Theatre's 2017.2018 season and was most recently on stage in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre, declaring an energizing and innovative new voice in music and theatre in Canada.

In this new piece, Njo Kong Kie, long-serving music director of Montreal's La La La Human Steps, introduces the Macau-based **Folga Gaang Project** in their Toronto debut. A hybrid musical performance, *Picnic in the Cemetery* juxtaposes the macabre with the whimsical in an abstract expression of our collective journey through the passage of time. Quirky and evocative, this concert-theatre piece featuring original compositions for violin, cello and piano is an invitation to muse about dying, but more importantly to reflect on living.

*“We are incredibly pleased to welcome Njo Kong Kie and his collaborators to Canadian Stage for this beginning of their two-year Berkeley Street residency,” said **Canadian Stage Artistic and General Director, Matthew Jocelyn**. “As musical director for La La La Human Steps, Kong Kie was present in my very first season at Canadian Stage, so the fact that he is now closing this season is particularly meaningful for me. His work truly defies categorization and, with this exquisite and rather existential piece of concert theatre, exemplifies the spirit of experimentation and multidisciplinary approach that is so vital to the future of live performance. Picnic in the Cemetery is a singular mix of contemporary music, cinematic imagery, performance and more, and a delightful end to what has been an unforgettable season.”*

Njo Kong Kie was born in Indonesia and grew up in Macau where he received his musical education from the Academia de Música São Pio X. Long-serving pianist and music director of La La La Human Steps, Kong Kie gave close to 600 performances with the company throughout Canada and abroad between 1996 and 2012. Now splitting his time between Toronto and Macau, Kong Kie was introduced to Toronto theatre audiences when he composed a score for Hannah Moscovitch’s play *Infinity* (2014.2015 Tarragon Theatre season).

The music in *Picnic in the Cemetery* was first published as an album, which took its name from Kong Kie’s habit of picnicking in the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, which he used to live near to.

*“I love picnics, and I love cemeteries,” shares **Kong Kie**. “For many years, I lived adjacent to a beautiful cemetery in Toronto, the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and I found myself having picnics there often. The scenery is beautiful, and the setting quiet; it offers a momentary relief from the hustle and bustle of the world. It also offers the chance to reflect on life and make peace with an inevitability that we are all scared of, one way or the other. It offers a connection to, or at least a meditation on, what may lie beyond our day-to-day.”*

Speaking to the origins of the theatre piece, Kong Kie adds, *“While touring with La La La Human Steps, I wrote short pieces to amuse my fellow musicians. This collection of work became Picnic in the Cemetery, an album of original compositions for violin, cello and piano. At its core, Picnic in the Cemetery is a chamber music concert, featuring a wide range of styles – from minimalist work with driving rhythm, to cinematic musical painting, to lyrical songs without words; but the stage show is also a hybrid of performance that incorporates elements of theatre and visual arts. While a general theme unifies this non-text based concert theatre work, there is no singular story, every audience member will form their own unique narrative.”*

Picnic in the Cemetery will be on stage at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre from April 26 – May 6 (Media night: April 26). Performances run Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8:00pm, Fridays at 7:00pm, with 1:00pm matinees on Sundays. Tickets from \$39 to \$69 are available online, by phone at 416.368.3110, or in person at the Berkeley Street box office. For details visit canadianstage.com.

Facebook: Canadian Stage | **Twitter/Instagram:** @CanadianStage | #csPicnic
Website: canadianstage.com/online/picnic

About *Picnic in the Cemetery*

A Music Picnic & Point View Art production in partnership with Canadian Stage.

On stage at the Berkeley Street Theatre Upstairs April 26 – May 6 (Media night: April 26).

Creative Team:

Created by **Njo Kong Kie**

For more information or interview requests, please contact:

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About Njo Kong Kie — IN RESIDENCE 17.18/18.19

Njo Kong Kie is a Toronto composer of dance, opera and theatre. His compositions have been heard in productions of such companies as Nederlands Dans Theater, Ballet National de L'Opera du Rhin, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Singapore Dance Theatre and Ballet BC. His latest works include *Infinity* (Volcano/Tarragon) and *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (SummerWorks/Tarragon/National Arts Centre).

About Canadian Stage — Celebrating 30 seasons

Founded in 1987, Canadian Stage is one of the country's leading not-for-profit contemporary performing arts companies, sharing new, innovative stage work from Canada and around the world. Led by Artistic & General Director Matthew Jocelyn, Canadian Stage produces and presents a new hybrid of multidisciplinary performance that pushes the boundaries of form and style, integrating theatre, dance, music, multimedia and more. Canadian Stage is dedicated to reinforcing the presence of Canadian art and artists within an international cultural dialogue, by acting as a home, incubator and exporter of leading Canadian and global performance. The company stages an annual season at three historic locations: the Bluma Appel Theatre; the Berkeley Street Theatre; and the High Park Amphitheatre, home to Shakespeare in High Park. Offering a range of education, artist training and community outreach programs, Canadian Stage is committed to cultivating tomorrow's artistic innovators and audiences. For more information, visit canadianstage.com.