

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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Some of the faces behind Resound Collective (above from left) Mervin Beng, Jonathan Lee, Jason Lai and Seah Huan Yuh. PHOTO: DIOS VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

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## Singapore's first professional chamber orchestra re:Sound plays its debut concert on Aug 31

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There is a new kid on the block in Singapore's classical music scene. While it may be dwarfed in size by the full-size orchestras that have long dominated the scene, it is a heavyweight in both reputation and ambition.

The country's very first professional chamber orchestra, re:Sound, makes its debut at the Victoria Concert Hall on Aug 31.

It is run by the Resound Collective, an ensemble whose founding artistic committee includes freelance classical music reviewer Mervin Beng, conductors Jason Lai and Seow Yi Bin, and violinists Loh Jun Hong and

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"Now, when I tell them it's coming true, most of them say: 'Finally. It's about time.'"

While a full-size orchestra can have more than 100 musicians, the chamber orchestra is usually made up of fewer than 50.

## BOOK IT /RE:SOUND– THE JOURNEY BEGINS

**WHERE:** Victoria Concert Hall, 9 Empress Place

**WHEN:** Aug 31, 8.15pm

**ADMISSION:** \$28 and \$38 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg))

Large orchestras, among them the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) and the Orchestra of the Music Makers, have dominated here, but the men behind re:Sound are going small to offer audiences a different side of music.

Lai, 42, associate conductor of the SSO, says: "I've noticed that concerts here are very good on scale: big concerts with lots of musicians and lots of things happening. And that's great. But there's another more intimate side of music that I've always wanted to explore.

"You can still make music without the razzmatazz and forces of a thousand people. And it's great to be able to do that now with a group that's built of like-minded musicians."

A smaller orchestra also gives the musician's personalities a chance to come through more in the music, he adds.

Its concertmaster Seah says re:Sound's priorities include honing the abilities of musicians here and building a sense of community.

"We're bringing passionate, skilled musicians together and pushing them a little further," says the 36-year-old. "It's a bit of a training ground for them and also a group they can go to to talk and think about music together.

The orchestra, says violist Jonathan Lee, 28, can serve as an avenue for musicians like him to run through different musical ideas and experiment in a more democratic setting.

Its debut concert will see 35 musicians, either born or based in Singapore, performing works by Mozart, Stravinsky and Schubert under Lai's baton.

Beng calls re:Sound a "truly Singapore chamber orchestra": About 40 per cent of its members have links to the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, while 20 per cent are related to the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Former SSO members, including violist Lim Soon Lee, have also signed on.

And the chamber orchestra has already set the community abuzz.

Beng says young composers have expressed interest in writing pieces for the orchestra, while some Singapore musicians based overseas have reached out to him, looking to potentially perform with the orchestra next year.

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re:Sound has received venue support from the Victoria Concert Hall and a grant from the National Arts Council for its debut concert.

The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory has offered rehearsal space support and three of its current students will be playing with the orchestra through its first season.

Foundations and well-wishers have also chipped in. But Beng says: "Whatever we can't make up in ticket sales, we will fund ourselves."

He adds: "This orchestra is above all about the love of music and paying tribute to the different sides of music. Our name reflects our philosophy.

"Sound is what we're about, whether we're reinventing it or helping people - both musicians and audiences - rediscover it."