

NAFA Alumni Kaki Series

Crafting Musical Lives



Terrence Wong
Bachelor of Music (Honours), 2014
Diploma in Music, 2009



Nicholas Ong
Diploma in Music, 2015

Crafting Musical Lives is a podcast that centres on the creation of biographical narratives pertaining to musicians throughout the ages. Join music alumni **Nicholas Ong, Terrence Wong**, and their guests in exploring the process of life-writing and the methods adopted by biographers to create a comprehensive account of the lives of musicians.

Crafting

Musical Lives



Presented by
Nicholas Ong and Terrence Wong

1. Thanks for accepting this interview. Please share a short introduction of yourselves!

Terrence: We are both currently pursuing our Masters in the UK (Terrence at the Royal College of Music and Nicholas at the University of Oxford). We first met at NAFA when we were both students – myself on the degree course while Nick was on the diploma course. Our paths have crossed several times since – at SAF band and during our studies in the UK.

2. Do share more with us on your new podcast series, 'Crafting Musical Lives', how did it come about and who is your target audience?

Nicholas: The podcast is targeted at music enthusiasts but is accessible to a general audience. It explores the process of life-writing and the methods adopted by biographers to create a comprehensive account of musicians' lives. We would like to dispel the myth that biographies are objective pieces of writing and that they convey the absolute truth.

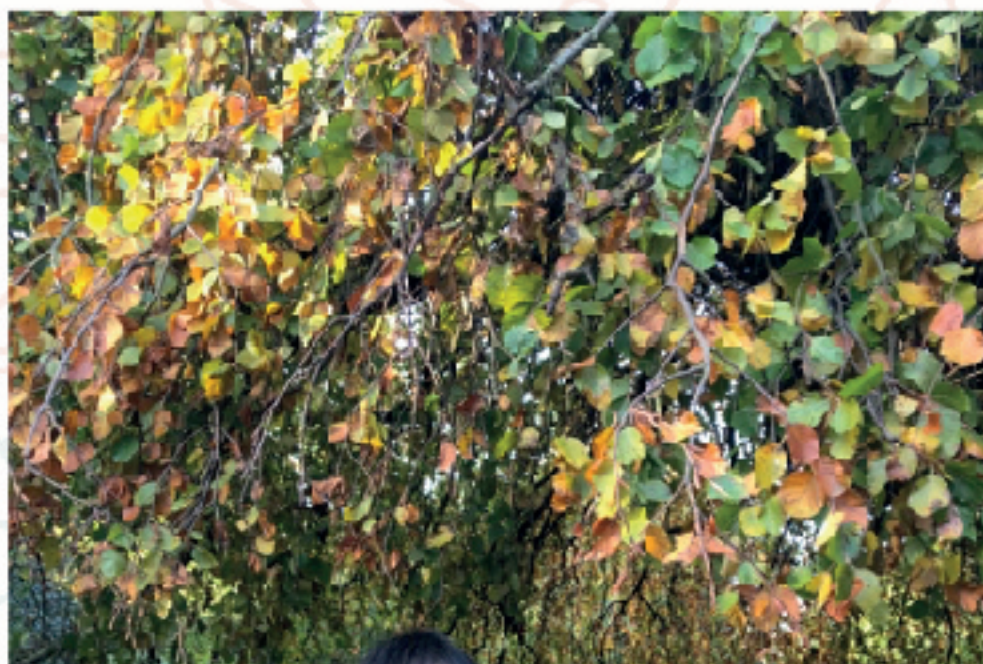
By interviewing biographers, we hope to show that biographies are as much about the biographers as it is about the subject.

Terrence: Nick and I have had conversations about this, and we thought that it would be interesting to hear directly from biographers. Making it a podcast would allow our discussions and these interesting thoughts to reach a broader and deserving audience.

3. Share with us your experiences studying abroad, what is one hardest challenge which you've overcome and one best highlight which you've experienced?

Terrence: Studying in the UK marks the longest period of time in which I have been away from family and friends. Fortunately, modern technology allows us communicate frequently at low costs, bridging the physical distance, and making the experience more bearable.

Nicholas: The hardest challenge was to curb my craving for Singaporean food, which, to have as a non-foodie, came as quite a surprise. I believe I'd have many sympathisers with this. Highlights have been the many opportunities to travel around Europe and within the UK. A particularly memorable trip was one to Russia which definitely reinforced my interest in its history and culture.



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Terrence:

On a morning walk together with the rest of the Composition Faculty at the Kensington Gardens, led by a guide from the Royal Parks, conducted in preparation of the 'Music for Trees' project, where RCM composition students are tasked to write a short piece of music for each particular type of tree for public listening on a phone app.



4. How did NAFA prepare you for your studies in the UK?

Terrence: NAFA has helped me to hone my fundamental skills in composition and conducting, and the mandatory 7-week exchange that I had to undertake as part of my Bachelor of Music Degree course at the Royal College of Music in London certainly helped me settle back in to the aforementioned college with relative ease.

Nicholas: Although I studied music performance at NAFA, my time (t)here definitely made me realise that I am interested more in other areas of music, areas which I pursued in the UK.

5. Which lecturers inspired you the most during your studies and why?

Terrence: Dr Zechariah Goh and Mr Lim Yau were both instrumental (pun unintended) in inspiring me to keep furthering my skills in composition and conducting. They certainly impressed on me the fundamental need to question everything and to have strong, informed reasons behind every artistic decision I had to make.

Nicholas: Dr Rebecca Kan was perhaps the most influential from NAFA in my musical studies. Her approach to teaching was always an enthusiastic one. She was supportive of her students and provided sound advice for an education/career in musicology.

6. Please share some Christmas/New Year wishes for our alumni readers!

Terrence: May everyone, wherever they are in the world, have a Merry Christmas ahead, and hopefully 2021 will bring about positive winds of change!

Nicholas: What a year 2020 has (not) been! Alas, here's wishing all a very merry Christmas and a very happy 2021!

**NAFA
Alumni Relations Office
wishes all alumni
Merry Christmas and
a brighter 2021!**



Nicholas on Matriculation Day 2020 at the University of Oxford