

Prach Boondiskulchok

PIANO TRIO II  
Songs Without Words

Where oppressive regimes have silenced voices of dissent, music has often been both the object of silencing, as well as the act of resistance. Opaquer than words, music eludes literalism. But music can also forge identities and communicate powerful sentiments, defying attempts to contain and control. This Piano Trio “Songs Without Words” explores such power to sublimate meanings of words. While paying homage to the lyrical pieces of the same name by Felix Mendelssohn, the three “Songs” here do, however, contain words. But performed instrumentally without voice, the words hide themselves.

**I. Prayer Lost in Smoke** is a reinterpretation of a collection of Theravadan Buddhist chants, including the chanting of the strict precepts. In this ascetic tradition, music is one of the “forbidden” activities, but the prayers are chanted in ways that at times become music in itself.

**II. Forbidden Words** derives its materials from sound recordings of utterances of “forbidden words” from my country, a place of many forbidden words. Thai is a tonal language, and its words have pitch contours attached to them. So while these words are “censored” inside the music, the tones, and perhaps some meanings, are preserved.

**III. Old Love Song** reimagines a late 19th Century Thai court song about forbidden love. Heard through the pale of history, fragments of the original song weave in and out of recognisability throughout the movement.