

Lydia Ayers

Composer, Flutist, Educator, Puppeteer

22 Aug 1952 – 6 Jan 2022

Lydia passed away peacefully in her sleep after a 3-year battle with cancer. Her breath stopped several minutes before her heartbeat, allowing well-wishers an encore round of heartfelt goodbyes, a tribute to the perseverance of her loving and fighting spirit. Her warm and creative persona touched many people with the power of her earthy spirituality in her compositions, puppet productions, and general creativity. She also had a deep love for nature, vegetarian cooking, family & friends, and her beloved cats.



After moving to Hong Kong with her husband Andrew, Lydia taught at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, where she created a course on musical instrument building using recycled materials and rubbish washed up on the beach. The students came up with some really imaginative stuff like a Shoe Rack-Tea Can harp (see photo on left).

Lydia loved ethnic musical instruments and nature sounds and combining them with technology. For example, she composed a piece for Native American flute, didgeridoo and soundscape called [Rock Art in the Dream World](#). The piece features real and synthesized bird sounds recorded while hiking, including the famous laughing kookaburra, and the hisses of kangaroos and synthesized didgeridoos.

In another earthy piece that connected with a lot of people, Lydia's *Great Spirit Song* was based on the text of a Native American prayer to the four directions and the earth and sky. Lydia wrote it for children's choir and Native American flutes with recorded computer music. Lydia performed the flute parts herself with various school and church choirs in HK and the US.



Lydia (center) with the St. Stephen's College Preparatory School Senior Choir.

In later life, Lydia formed a puppet group called [Foggy Sound Garden](#) and created and performed many original shows around her music, as well as a production to Stravinsky's [Petrushka](#) with live music, which tells the story of a puppet who comes to life. Lydia was great at improvising, and when a devil puppet's leg broke off in the middle of a performance, she made him dance a descent to the underworld instead of dancing a jumping jig with joy. Lydia also performed an improv on Native American flute while simultaneously controlling a dancing [Kokopelli](#) puppet with strings draped off her flute-wielding arms – an example of multi-tasking on steroids! It illustrates Lydia's multi-talents and thirst to creatively combine different performance mediums and elements.



Petrushka, Moor, and Ballerina puppets.



Left: Lydia behind the scenes at Petrushka performance. Right: Lydia's gourmet cooking operation with sous-chef Vina the cat.

In closing, Lydia's first cat was named Yazi. She had the unusual talent of making bird-like chirping songs when looking out the window at birds, perhaps in hopes of catching some lunch. After many years, when Yazi passed away, Lydia touchingly read the following excerpt from Tagore's *Fireflies* at Yazi's funeral:

When death comes and whispers to me, "Thy days are ended," let me say to him, "I have lived in love and not in mere time." He will ask, "Will thy songs remain?" I shall say, "I know not, but this I know that often when I sang I found my eternity."