

You may have seen the sweet nymphette gazing joyfully at the sky on the sleeve of Jenny Tong's previous album, *In the Mood of... Dreams*, a collection of ambient compositions with classically trained Tong at the piano. The image is a tad misleading, so I wasn't expecting the ultra-confident glamour puss that sits across the table from me. It's as though I booked brunch with Charlotte York and Samantha Jones showed up instead.

Tong is a sly one, and lets you know. She cheerfully talks about her uncanny ability to get people to spill their beans to her, and indeed it isn't long before I start to blabber about my personal life – having been pre-warned! A dangerous interviewee, she asks questions back, and it's only the thought of hearing myself on the Dictaphone playback (or worse, my colleagues hearing) that puts me back on my guard.

Working as a financial consultant by day, Tong is privy to much of the goings on in her clients' lives. "Originally you might be looking at their investments, bonds and equities, and eventually they'll mention, 'Actually, my wife is very much on the conservative side', which leads to, 'I may plan to divorce soon and might marry again.' I ask if they're having an affair already, and they'll say, 'No, no, it's not like that,' and after that the whole story comes out: 'Well, you know, I work in China

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all the time, and this girl is there, and my wife is a psycho...' So you close the deal, you get a very interesting story, and you write another song or another poem." She plans to be a psychologist by the time she's 50, because she'd get a lot of great material. And there's money in it of course.



One would be forgiven for assuming that Tong must have a cynical attitude towards love and relationships, but when I suggest this, she gives a vehement, "Nooo!" After considering a nanosecond, she adds, "It's just very versatile. A new friend of mine recently told me, 'I just look into your eyes, and I can tell you're a hopeless romantic.' I almost died laughing." Yet it's a side of her that definitely exists, as evidenced from her descriptions of songs off her new album, *Love is Blind*.

Child of Love – Meeting someone whose name reminded me of The Child of Love, and of course the affections that come with that! Doesn't love just make us feel like a little kid again?

Love is Blind – Sometimes I wonder if we can ever fall in love if we look clearly at ourselves, but since love is blind, it really doesn't matter.

Under His Wings – When you find the right guy, it really doesn't matter whether he takes you on his wings, or under his wings, 'cos either way, you love it!

One Day In The Island – The one hopelessly romantic scene we all die for in a movie: a beautiful lake, sunset, birds, falling leaves, sea breeze, and yeah, Him...

Patently not the thoughts of a hardened sceptic. But then again, she's not the typical dreamy romantic either. "It's difficult to describe. At times I really do feel like I'm in love. If you tell your friends you're

in love, they're going to ask you with whom. I'll tell them, 'No one, I'm just in love!' When you fall in love you feel free, happy, sexy, attractive, like everything is beautiful. I feel like that all the time, that's my character. I feel that love is all around."

The concept behind the album reveals another surprisingly lyrical side of Tong. It is the soundtrack for a film that hasn't been written yet about an angel and a mermaid that fall in love with mortal humans. As Tong explains, "If you put all the track titles together or the music together, it's very visually evocative, and it can really easily fit into a movie. We [Tong and her crew at Eyez, her production house] plan to sell the synopsis, *Love is Blind*, to a film company or a bigger production house. It's not easy because, of course, the usual route is getting a movie out and then selling a soundtrack off the back of that. If I can sell it as a movie, then great. If not, maybe I can target publishing houses and see if I can do it as a book."

I can't help but voice my astonishment: on top of juggling financial consulting, running a production house and making music, she'll be writing films and novels? Tong is adamant that you shouldn't have to limit creativity to a single outlet. "I love writing. I write poems, I write prose and I like writing, playing and producing music most of



all. How do you get creativity? Creativity comes from life. You meet people and almost every one of them gives you a bit of inspiration. It's something to write about if you want to. Or if you're a composer you compose. Or if you're a painter you might paint it." Almost as an afterthought, she indicates the cover of the new album. "By the way, I painted this myself."

It sounds like multi-tasking gone insane. "A script isn't super complicated if you want to write something about love or romance," insists Tong, with characteristic self-assurance. "But to actually be able to sell it, that's hard. And to get an actor, that's difficult. But Hong Kong's economy is getting better now, so maybe it won't be as hard as I anticipate."

Tong attributes part of her Renaissance woman tendencies to her single status. "If you're not married and you don't have a long-term relationship that consumes all your time after work, then you have a lot of spare time to do things." Is being single helpful productively? "I guess so. It certainly means you meet more guys, I mean, more people in general. Put it this way, you meet a lot of interesting people and interesting people have interesting stories and they share with you."

Like the entire saga of their private lives, presumably? Funnily enough, the only question Tong flounders on is what seemed to me the most straightforward: If she didn't need to work for money, would she pack in the finance job to concentrate on music? It is her turn to look nonplussed. "How can I say this? That's a very tricky question." She tiptoes diplomatically through it. "I would keep doing it... to the extent that... I could spend more time in my production house... But I would still be doing it up to my best ability and my clients' expectations." She flashes a mischievous Jenny smile and refuses to say any more.