

Silk Dialogues with Forum Music

With support from National Culture and Arts Foundation (Taiwan)

Thursday 26th October , 7:30pm, Firth Hall

PERFORMANCE
VENUES
CONCERTS

Jiuan-Reng Yeh, Guzheng 葉娟祜
Jou-An Hou, Cello 侯柔安
Ya-Ting Wang, Percussion 汪雅婷

Quiet Night, Spring Mountain is Empty
(夜靜春山空) for Cello and Guzheng (2020) Hsien-Sheng Lien
12'30"

Sà (颯) for Guzheng solo (2017) Chia-Lin Pan
12'00"

Circumambulating the Mountain (轉·山)
for Vibraphone solo (2008) Tan-Ling Yu
10'00"

Another Time for Guzheng, Cello and Percussion Michael Norris
8'00"

Interval

Water Song (水調歌頭) for Guzheng and Vibraphone Jereon Speak
11'00"

Ancient Verses (古詩) Paul SanGregory
Five Pieces for Unaccompanied Cello (2014) 11'30"
III. Drinking With the Moon (舉杯邀明月)
I. Spring Returning (春歸)

Two for solo Guzheng Ellen Sargen
4'15"

Feng Huo Lun (風火輪) Dorothy Ker
for Guzheng, Cello and Percussion 6'00"

Quiet Night, Spring Mountain is Empty (夜靜春山空):

According to “Five Miscellaneous Poems inspired in the Yunxi village of Huangfa Yue” by Wang Wei

These pieces attempt to use cello and guzheng to express the poetic flavour of three poems in Wang Wei’s “Five Miscellaneous Poems inspired in the Yunxi village of Huangfu Yue,” including “Bird-Singing Stream,” “The Upland Fields,” and “The Duckweeds Pool.” Like the philosopher Tam Ka-Git interpreted in his *Shiwenxue Sixiang* (Thoughts of Poem and Literature), these three poems respectively express the eternities of quietness, labour, as well as the division and union of all things in the world. The second piece of the work, “The Upland Fields,” quotes a melody from the traditional Hakka “Eight Sounds” called Twelve Feet. By integrating a Taiwanese folk style into Wang Wei’s poetic atmosphere, it evokes the simplicity of farmers diligently labouring all seasons under its pleasant and warm tune. The musical materials utilized in the work are simple and contain many polymodal textures.

Hsien-Sheng Lien:

Born in Taipei, Lien Hsien-Sheng has studied musicology with Hsu Tsang-Houei, music theory with Lu Yen and music analysis with Chang Hao after graduating from the Law School of National Taiwan University. He has also translated *Technique de Mon Langage Musical* by Olivier Messiaen into Chinese and published it in Taiwan. In 1993, he went to France for advanced studies with the scholarship offered by the government of Taiwan. He studied composition with Alain Weber, Jacques Castérède, Yoshihisa Taira and Michaël Levinas in Paris. In the spring of 2005, he received his doctorate degree in Musicology at the University of Paris IV – Sorbonne. As a composer, Lien was awarded the first prize of Creation of Literature and Art by the Ministry of Education Taiwan in 1998 and has won the first prize of 2005 Formosa Composition Competition, as well as the second prize of 2006 Hsu Tsang-Houei International Music Composition Award. In 2014, he published *Yinyue de Xiandaixing yu Shuqingxing – Taiwan Shiye de Dangdai Dongya Yinyue* (Modernity and Lyricism in the Contemporary Music of Taiwan and East Asia) in Taiwan. Currently, he is an associate professor in the Department of Music at the National Pingtung University, and chairperson of Asian Composer League – Taiwan National Committee.

Sà (颯):

The word “Sà (颯)” refers to the sound of wind, or directly to the wind itself. When used as a verb, it refers to the movement of wind, which is the flow of “Qi” in space. This solo piece “Sà” uses the techniques and timbres of Guzheng to represent the movements of wind, the sound it produces, and also the flow of “Qi”, both concretely and abstractly. The work attempts to use the sound of the Guzheng as a metaphor of the emotions and perceptions brought by various movements of the air (wind).

Chia-Lin Pan:

Taiwanese composer Chia-lin Pan received her Doctorate of Music in Composition from Northwestern University (Illinois, U.S.A.) and earned both her Bachelor and Master degrees from National Taiwan Normal University (國立臺灣師範大學 Taipei, Taiwan). She studied composition with Prof. M. W. Karlins, Yen Lu (盧炎), Hwang-long Pan (潘皇龍), Alan Stout, Augusta Read Thomas, and Jay Alan Yim. Her works have been performed at major festivals, including the Asian Composers' League (ACL) Music Festivals and the International Society of Contemporary (ISCM) World Music Days. She works closely with the members of many contemporary music ensembles such as Pacifica String Quartet, The Eighth Blackbird, The Bugallo-Williams Piano Duo, Duo Diorama, NU Contemporary Music Ensemble, NanaFormosa Percussion Group, The Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra, Chia Found Music Workshop, New Taipei City Symphony Orchestra, Taipei Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan Wind Ensemble, Evergreen Symphony Orchestra, Taipei Music Forum Ensemble, Ju Percussion Group and National Symphony Orchestra (Taiwan Philharmonic). Dr. Pan is a Professor in Music Composition at the University of Taipei, and is also currently the President of ISCM Taiwan Section.

Circumambulating the Mountain (轉·山):

"I once thought what I was searching for was some destination or goal. I didn't realize all of this was nothing but process until I turned around."

*~by Wang-Ling Hsieh,
from Circumambulating the Mountain: The Wanderer at the border*

The idea of composing this vibraphone solo started after the composer finished reading the book "Circumambulating the Mountain". The connotation of the book is: "the process is more important than the results". Hence the piece is composed with a concept of "spheric structure." Two ways of interpretation are derived from this spheric structure concept -- cycling and coexistence. A number series "3 8 6 6 8 3 9 8 9" is designed to embody the interpretation, which not only repeats as a whole, but also with two sub-groups, "3 8 6 6 8 3" and "9 8 9". This model represents the revolution and rotation of planets, which form the cycles of day and night, and the four seasons. The first movement uses this series to generate pitch, while the second movement uses it for the intervals. The muffling technique in this piece represents the idea that both hearing and unhearing a sound are forms of "happening", while they can also coexist.

Tan-Ling Yu:

Whilst studying at the Institute of Music, National Chiao Tung University, Yu Tan Ling majored in percussion and studied under Huang Jin-Shiang,

Cheng Li-Feng, and Hsu Bor-nien. She joined the NCTU Bus 2 Improvisation Ensemble during the graduate school and performed at the Red House, Goethe Institut Taipei, Performing Arts School 36, and the Hsinchu City Performing Arts Center. Inspired by improvisation, she started to pursue self-realization and study composition with Dong Zhaomin, and then published “Circumambulating The Mountain” for vibraphone solo. She joined the Forum Music Percussion Ensemble in 2009. She is currently the Artistic Executive of Mivenu.com, an educational online concert platform specialized in percussion music.

Another Time:

Another Time is a reflection on the temporal and sonic qualities of stillness, movement, dislocation and solidarity. The work opens with a static field of pure but fragile pitches, a moment of translucent but ultimately unsustainable stasis. The players gradually induce small impulses and energies into the material, animating the fabric of time. A gestural drama played out between the instruments is gradually revealed, one that reverberates around the ensemble, suggesting different ways of interacting with those around us. The composition of this piece was disrupted by the emergence of Covid 19, a global infliction of stasis and dislocation into a dynamic fabric of time.

Michael Norris:

Michael Norris (b. 1973) is a Wellington-based composer, software programmer and music theorist. He holds composition degrees from Victoria University of Wellington and City University, London, and is currently Programme Leader, Composition at Te Kōkī New Zealand School of Music, Victoria University of Wellington. He is recipient of the 2001 Mozart Fellowship, the 2003 Douglas Lilburn Prize, the 2012 CANZ Trust Fund Award and has been nominated for the SOUNZ Contemporary Award five times, winning it in 2014 with his work Inner Phases for string quartet and Chinese instrument ensemble, and again in 2018 for his work Sygyt for throat-singer, ensemble and live electronics.

He has participated in composition courses featuring leading composers such as Peter Eötvös, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff and Kaija Saariaho, and has had performances from the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Roberto Fabbriciani, Michael Houstoun, the New Zealand String Quartet, NZTrio, Richard Haynes, the Viennese Saxophonic Orchestra, Ensemble Offspring, Stroma, the Israel Contemporary Players and the Ensemble Pierrot Lunaire Wien.

In 2010, he was commissioned by the SWR (Sudwestdeutsche Rundfunk) to write a new chamber orchestra work, Sgraffito, which was premiered at the Donaueschinger Musiktage 2010 by the Radio Chamber Orchestra Hilversum, conducted by Peter Eötvös. Die Zeit reviewed Sgraffito as one of the highlights of the festival.

Michael is also co-founder and co-director of Stroma Music Ensemble, and has collaborated with a number of other artists including Daniel Belton and Ashley Brown. He is coordinator of the Creative New Zealand/Jack C. Richards

Composer-in-Residence at the NZSM, and serves on the boards of the Lilburn Residence Trust and Stroma New Music Trust. He is currently an Executive Committee Member of the Asian Composers League, and is the Editor of Wai-te-ata Music Press. Michael's programming work is also renowned. His 'SoundMagic Spectral' suite of real-time FFT-based audio effects have been used extensively in both industry and academia worldwide, and by artists such as Aphex Twin and Brian Eno.

**PERFORMANCE
VENUES
CONCERTS**

Water Song (水調歌頭):

Water song for Guzheng and vibraphone is the 3rd work I have written for the Guzheng and an attempt to further integrate both the Guzhengs timbre and technical idiosyncrasies into my own musical language. The work is in 3 short movements which is in itself born from basic technical limitations: the bow is used in the outer two movements and discarded for the central one. From the start I wanted to find timbral meeting points between the instruments, which I approached by exploring the various ways these instruments produce; attacks, decay, and suspensions of sound, and applying them in different registers. The title was chosen to reflect the sound-world I wanted to reflect: a memory from my mis-spent childhood swimming in the harbour of my hometown on the Pacific coast at a very early age, hearing a submerged soundscape that I never fully understood at the time, I remember ducking underwater again and again to hear it. It must have been the sound of the ships creaking against the wharf, the pylons slowly moving and my own imagination filling in the gaps: mermaid and whale song perhaps.

Jeroen Speak:

Jeroen Speak studied composition at Victoria University, Wellington, NZ before coming to the UK to study with Michael Finnissy and Jonathan Harvey at the University of Sussex, where he completed his PhD. The recipient of numerous national and international awards, Speak has been featured and commissioned by many International Festivals, including the Huddersfield Festival, ISCM festival, Gaudeamus, London Ear Festival, Inside Out Festival, Borealis Festival, and the ACL Festival.

He has worked extensively in Taiwan and China and has been Composer in Residence for Visiting Arts (UK/China) and Artist Links (UK/Taiwan) supported by the British Council as well as composer in residence at the New Zealand School of Music. In Taiwan Speak worked closely with Forum Music on a number of projects including several commissions and recordings of his work including his Percussion Concerto, premiered in Novel Hall, Taipei in 2013. In 2022 Speak worked with the critically acclaimed New Century Dance Company as composer and music director on a large-scale work that utilized public spaces in metro stations as performance spaces. Most recently he has been working on an ambitious project 'Silk Dialogues' involving composers and performers from China, New Zealand, Taiwan and the UK which focuses on collaboration between eastern and western cultures.

Ancient Verses (古詩):

Five Pieces for Unaccompanied Cello (2014)

III. Drinking With the Moon (舉杯邀明月)

I. Spring Returning (春歸)

This group of five pieces for solo cello is based on images that one might expect to find in ancient Chinese stories or poetry, but they do not relate to specific poems or stories. Therefore, listeners are free to let imagination fill in missing details of scenery or action as they see fit. Some pieces do borrow techniques or details from Chinese music, but my intention is not to be stylistically accurate. I simply want to inspire listeners' creative imaginations. Stated poetically, one might imagine the cello bow to be a musical writing brush tracing out wordless verses that the performer brings to life.

I. Spring Returning

In some ways, the title of this piece is completely self-explanatory. I would like to add, though, the image of an older person sitting quietly, observing, recollecting, musing and contemplating the new beginnings of spring. Generally, this is an elegant and lyrical piece that includes some obvious influences from Chinese music.

III. Drinking With the Moon

I feel that the title of this piece captures its mood rather accurately. Musically, it includes many pitch bends that produce microtones (pitches that fall between the notes of a piano) and plucked notes. These techniques are used to evoke both a certain type of solitude and a quasi-Eastern sense of ornamentation and expressivity. My hope is that the piece will foster the image of someone spending a quiet beautiful summer night alone.

Paul SanGregory:

Paul SanGregory's music has been performed in Taiwan and other Asian countries, North America, Europe, and many other countries around the world. It has also been broadcast and discussed on radio in the US, Europe, Hong Kong, Taiwan and New Zealand. He graduated from Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, then taught composition and theory at the University of Indianapolis and the University of Toledo before moving to Taiwan, where he has taught for many years at National Kaohsiung Normal University, National Sun Yat-Sen University, and National Pingtung University. In years past he also coached, conducted and composed for NKNU's Contemporary Chamber Music Ensemble. He is currently a Professor of Music at National Kaohsiung Normal University in Kaohsiung, and serves on the board of directors for the Asian Composers League Taiwan Section and The Taiwan Composers Association.

Two:

At the centre of this piece are two personas - one open, relaxed; the other tense, aggressive. These personas are written into the kinaesthetic language of the piece, weaved from material that is at once physical, heavy, then immediately spacious, light. These two personas play off

against each other, consistently impacting the performer's physical body to create an emotive theatre throughout.

PERFORMANCE
VENUES
CONCERTS

Ellen Sargen:

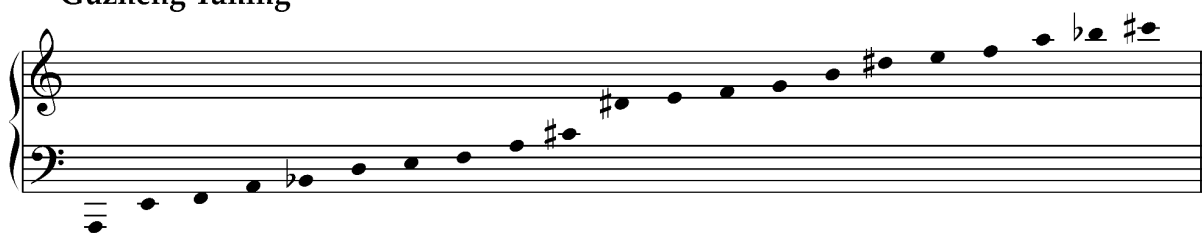
Ellen Sargen is a composer, performer and researcher based in Manchester. She is currently studying for a PhD in long-term composer-performer collaboration at the RNCM, having previously studied for her undergraduate and Masters degrees at the University of Sheffield. Her recent work has included projects with House of Bedlam, Ensemble Recherche, Riot Ensemble and Psappa, Sarah Watts, Shu Jiang and Zi Lan Liao among others. Recent work has been performed at Ensemblehaus (Freiberg), Bishopsgate Institute (London), Firth Hall (Sheffield), RNCM Concert Hall (Manchester) and featured by OperaVision, Lost and Found (Sydney), RNCM Future Music Festivals, RNCM PLAY Festivals and Incognito Manchester in the concert hall and in audiovisual formats. Commissions have included those from National Opera Studio, Music in the Round and Classical Sheffield.

Feng Huo Lun (風火輪):

In *Feng Huo Lun* (meaning 'wind-and-fire wheel') I wanted to focus on the timbral synergies of the instruments and their tactile qualities, working with a cyclic process that aims to capture both contrasts and similarities, as well the energy and focus of the guzheng as 'driver' of the ensemble. Drafted at the beginning of 2020, the anticipated development of the piece in collaboration with the performers (scheduled for April 2020) was held up in the tide of the pandemic. Returning to it has been like accessing a former energy-state that can only be re-animated in the hands of the performers, to whom I am extremely grateful.

Shown below, the tuning for the piece diverges from the guzheng's D-D repeating pentatonic template to make a symmetrically-arranged 21-note scale over 4 octaves, with E at the centre of a semitone cluster around which it gravitates. To align with the low A on the guzheng, the lowest string of the cello is 'detuned' a minor third, which emphasizes a percussive quality when played without the bow, complementing the especially dark bowed tone.

Guzheng Tuning



Performers biographies:

Cellist / Jou-An Hou

“Jou-An Hou, a cellist of enormous energy and personal warmth...an extraordinary artist,” hailed by Bernard Greenhouse, founding member of Beaux Arts Trio. “

Dr. Jou-An Hou, Associate Professor of Cello at the Soochow University in Taiwan, has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician throughout Asia, Europe, South Africa, and the United States.

Hou, a native of Taiwan, began her music training with the piano at age five and the cello at age eight. She holds a Master of Music degree from the Mannes College of Music in New York City, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Cello Performance from the University of Texas at Austin where she graduated magna cum laude. She has been instilled with the legacies of her principal teachers Che-Min Chen, Paul Tobias, Bion Tsang, and Bernard Greenhouse.

Hou has won many awards, including Second Prize in the Alexander and Buono International String Competition, the Gold Medal at the Kaohsiung City Cello Competition and the Silver Medal from the Taiwan Cello Competition. Her doctoral lecture recital was lauded as “Outstanding Lecture Recital” at the UT Butler School of Music and was published in STRINGS magazine.

Hou has collaborated with such international artists as violinists Olivier Charlier, Qian Zhou, Ryu Goto, Yu-Chien Tseng, Violist Hsin-Yun Huang, pianist Noreen Cassidy-Polera. She is the founding member of the MUSE Piano Trio.

Hou plays on a Patrick Robin cello specially made for Bernard Greenhouse in 2002.

Guzheng / Jiuan-Reng Yeh:

Dr. Yeh, Jiuan-Reng, Guzheng soloist, is one of the leading musicians in the traditional music of Taiwan. She was awarded a Ph.D. in musicology from NTNU in 2015. She currently works at the Taiwan Music Center of National Center for Traditional Arts, and teaches at the National Taiwan University of Arts. Her interpretations of traditional music captivate through their variety and liveliness, and she belongs to the few interpreters in the area of new music, who can also realize complicated mutation and structures on her instrument.

From 1998, Yeh Jiuan-Reng was a member of the renowned Chai-Found Music Workshop Ensemble of Taipei, with whom she performed numerous times, presenting premieres of contemporary repertoire at festivals. She was invited to perform at the Vienna Konzerthaus,

Chamber Music Hall in the Berlin Philharmonie, the House of World Cultures Berlin, Darmstadt Institute of Music, Toronto Koerner Hall, Beijing Concert Hall, Taipei National Concert Hall, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, ACL Conference and Festival 2011 in Taiwan, 2012 in Israel, Shanghai Conservatory of Music New Music Week, Beijing Modern Music Festival, Canton Asian Music Festival, Taipei Traditional Arts Festival, Taipei International New Music Festival, France, Malaysia, Lithuania, Croatia, Poland, Korea, Japan, Singapore and India among others.

Percussion / Ya-Ting Wang:

Ya-Ting Wang has been a music enthusiast since childhood. She studied piano and Chinese traditional music, including pipa, yang-ching and Chinese percussion at her young age. She began her study of western percussion at the age of twenty after being inspired by the variety of the music. She entered the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and studied under Professor Jack Van Geem, where she received a Master of Music degree in 1999. Afterwards she pursued further studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and studied under professor Raymond Des Roches, where she received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 2002.

Besides percussion performance, Ms. Wang has put her hand to musical theatre and music composition. Her works includes “The Symbolism of Balloons and the Practicality of Fried Eggs- Music Theatre Opus No. 1”, “A Never-ending Flow of Words”, “The Journey”, “The Promenade of Poetry”, “The Sound of Autumn”. Moreover, she worked as composer and creative director for “Ocean Movement” in 2012. “The Journey,” her percussion theater recital, was nominated by 2009 Taishin Arts Awards for performing arts.

She is currently a full-time professor of Dept. of LOHAS Industries at Fo-Guang University, and a member of Forum Music Ensemble.

Forum Music Ensemble:

Forum Music Ensemble, a chamber music group devoted to the development of both local and international performing art, was established in 1996. Bor-Nien Hsu, the founder/director of Forum Music, is himself a renowned percussionist who specializes in contemporary percussion music. It’s adventurous programming consistently includes contemporary experimental pieces and the premieres of domestic composers. The talents of Forum Music Ensemble cover a wide range from the composition and arrangement to the performance of music for various chamber combinations.

Forum Music has been frequently invited to perform both locally and internationally. When invited to perform at the Taipei Theatre in New York in 1996, the group was hailed by the

New York Times as “...hauntingly graceful and emotionally searing; virtuosic and texturally invigorating”. In 2002, Forum Music Percussion was responsible for the musical production in Snow in August, the three acts opera based on the libretto by the Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature of 2000, Gao Xingjian.

**PERFORMANCE
VENUES
CONCERTS**

Silk Dialogues:

Silk Dialogues is an international network of leading composers and performers working cross-culturally to produce new compositions combining Chinese and Western instruments. The deeper aim is to establish a rich shared context for musical creativity that will evolve and develop over a series of projects and exchanges, while generating a new repertoire of works for Chinese-Western instrumental combinations.

Sponsored by the National Culture and Arts Foundation (Taiwan)



Coming up next

Our full programme for Autumn will launch in September, but some of the fantastic events are already on sale!

Visit our website for full details - www.performancevenues.group.shef.ac.uk

Balo - Surroundings Installation

Engineering Heartspace, Saturday 28 October
7.30pm - £12 - £15 Advance tickets

Gavin Bryars Ensemble

Firth Hall, Thursday 16 November
7:30pm - £8.50 - £17 Advance tickets