



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,  
DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS:

# HARMONY ACROSS BORDERS

Tour of Performances by:



Dr. Fritz Gechter, Piano



Dr. Yu-Mei Huang, Violin



Dr. Xiaohu Zhou, Bassoon

## FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2025

South Texas College - Cooper Center for the Performing Arts  
BlackBox Theater  
3200 Pecan Boulevard  
McAllen, TX 7850

### 1:30 P.M.

Free admission

# Harmony Across Borders Recording Project

## Program

### Piano 4 hands

- **Melancholy in the blooms under moonlight by Shih-Che Huang**  
Yu-Mei Huang & Fritz Gechter, piano

### Violin solo with accompaniment

- **Danses Pneumatiques by Dirk Christopher Denton**
- **Sleepless Jasmin by Shih-Che Huang**  
Yu-Mei Huang, violin  
Fritz Gechter, piano

### Trio

- **A Midsummer Night in the Countryside by Shih-Che Huang**
- **Danza del Río / River Dance by Colin Campbell (1970- )**
- **White Nights-Rhapsody on "Agni Parthene" for Piano Trio by Christopher Stanichar**

Yu-Mei Huang, violin  
Xiaohu Zhou, bassoon  
Fritz Gechter, piano

### Piano 4 hands

#### **Melancholy in the blooms under moonlight by Shih-Che Huang**

The four-hand piano arrangement is centered around the story of the Taiwanese folk song "Flower in the Rainy Night." It begins with Debussy's "Clair de Lune," conveying the sorrow of a woman working in a tavern. The middle section, a waltz, reflects memories of a happier time. Following by that, "Jardins sous la pluie" represents a sudden downpour, describing the girl's feelings of betrayal and introducing the theme of the song "Sorrow on a Moonlit Night." The piece concludes by returning to "Clair de Lune," bringing this sad story to an end.

## **Piano/ Violin Duet**

### **Dances Pneumatiques by Dirk Denton**

The harmonic basis (or palette) for [this] piece is elucidated in the opening (whole note) section, divided into four parts which later become the four dances. Then at the outset of each dance, I remind the listener what section of the harmonic palette is about to be used in the dance.

After that, I just came up with melodic and rhythmic motifs, employing the harmonic palette as a kind of limitation. I fully employ repetition to help make what some listeners may deem to be odd sounds seem "normal".

What guided me in my choices of harmonic palette? Fresh sounds, and tension and release. Harmony doesn't need to follow functional theoretical rules in order to create tension and release. As with all my pantonal compositions, I let my ear be my final guide; in other words what sounds good to my ears stays. My ears have been "seasoned" so to speak by a lifelong curiosity about/ openness to all kinds of music, from classical and jazz, to rock and pop and ethnic music from all over the world. So I definitely have complete faith in my ears to make the right decision with respect to harmonic choices.

The problem with atonal music in contrast with pantonal music is that the harmonic-melodic language is not accessible to the human ear. Why is that? Because it is overly mechanistic, and this, while perhaps interesting as novelty, keeps it at arm's length from the human heart. Emotions are the language of the heart. Good music accesses our hearts by stimulating the plethora of human emotions.

**-Dirk Denton**

### **Sleepless Jasmin by Shih-Che Huang**

"Jasmine Flower Sleepless" is based on the classic folk song "Jasmine Flower." The music showcases the fresh elegance of the jasmine flower, expressing the pursuit and longing for beautiful things through a smooth melody.

In the middle section, the piece introduces a segment from Italian composer Puccini's opera "Turandot," specifically "Nessun dorma" ("None Shall Sleep"), blending it with the motif of "Jasmine Flower." This added melody pushes the composition to an emotional climax. Before the lingering resonance fades, the piece transitions into a minor key, where the collision and fusion of the two musical themes symbolize the dialogue and interaction between Eastern and Western cultures. The sleepless jasmine flower intertwines with the sleepless princess, painting a dreamlike scene that transcends time and space, allowing listeners to feel the harmony and resonance between Eastern and Western music.

The final section returns to the "Jasmine Flower" theme, where the arranger has hidden a small surprise, hoping attentive listeners will discover this clever touch!

## **Piano/Violin/ Bassoon trio**

### **A Midsummer Night in the Countryside by Shih-Che Huang**

“A Midsummer Night in the Countryside” is a piece that blends Taiwanese folk music with Western classical music, leading listeners into a world filled with the atmosphere of summer. The composition incorporates Taiwanese folk tunes such as "Roast Pork Zong," "Jasmine in June," and "Northwest Rain" as its themes. These melodies vividly depict the characteristics of summer harvests, natural landscapes, and the rainy season, evoking memories and emotions related to the summer ambiance of Taiwan.

The piece begins by blending Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony with the folk tunes "Roast Pork Zong" and "Jasmine in June," symbolizing a tribute to nature and adding layers to this vibrant musical painting. In the middle section, Vivaldi's Summer is interwoven with the motif of "Northwest Rain," echoing the grandeur and power of thunderstorms in the summer. The ending mirrors the beginning, with the final accents symbolizing the arrival of spring thunder.

### **Danza del Río / River Dance by Colin Campbell**

Danza del Río / River Dance was commissioned by Drs. Huang and Gechter as part of a creative grant research project. The requirements expressed were that the work include elements of the Border, in this case the river and the dance, and South African elements—my native country, in this case the repetitive opening piano accompaniment and rhythms resembling a mbira (also known as a kalimba and finger piano). The dance section has a similar rhythmic reference to mariachi music, but also to the Viennese waltz. The closing section is a return to the African feel, similar to our locale along the border and the desert, more of the earthen and ethnic sounds utilizing the instruments in ways we do not normally hear: clicking sounds on the bassoon's finger holes and mechanism, flautando, sul ponticello executed con sordino (with the mute) in combination with harmonics usage on the violin (which resembles the uhadi bow, a Nguni instrument), and using the fingers to play the piano strings as a harp—the piano also needs to do something different! These unusual sounds are meant to resemble the dry heat, wind, and insects, the only sounds in the scorching sun once the river dries up.

### **White Nights-Rhapsody on “Agni Parthene” for Piano Trio by Christopher Stanichar**

In the summer of 2024, the composer Christopher Stanichar created White Nights for two faculty members at Texas A&M International University, Dr. Fritz Gechter (professor of piano) and Dr. Yu-Mei Huang (professor of violin). The commissioned work as requested to be an original piano trio that would reflect composer's ethnic heritage and be adaptable for various instruments.

The composition is built around the Greek Orthodox melody "Agni Parthene," a hymn to the Virgin Mary. The composer, who had long admired this melody after hearing it in Russian churches, later discovered that it was composed in the 1970s by Hieromonk Gregory, despite having believed it was of Byzantine origin.

*White Nights* is a rhapsody that explores the melody through various harmonies and time signatures. The work also includes a reference to the composer's Romance for piano, a piece inspired by his partner, Elena. White Nights is dedicated to both her and his friends Dr. Fritz Gechter and Dr. Yu-Mei Huang.