



The Music Department presents

# Timeless Tones, Modern Melodies

An Evening of Chinese Music Redefined

Co-Sponsored by the Skidmore Departments/Programs of  
Music, Asian Studies, Gender Studies, International Relations,  
and World Languages and Literatures.

Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 7:30PM  
Arthur Zankel Music Center  
Helen Filene Ladd Concert Hall

## Program

*Four Cantonese Melodies* (1998)

《广东音乐四首》

Cheng Jin Koh

Arr. by Hua Wu

Katelyn Weng, dizi

Beitong Liu, erhu

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

*Jiangnan Charm* (2001)

《江南风韵》

Guanren Gu

Arr. by Cheng Jin Koh

Katelyn Weng, dizi

Beitong Liu, erhu

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

*Give Me a Rose* (1961)

《送我一支玫瑰花》

Fandi Wang

Arr. by Qiang Zhang

Beitong Liu, erhu

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

*Earthly Contemplations* (1999)

《思凡》

Chen Yao

Beitong Liu, erhu

Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa

*Expressions of Qinchuan* (1980)

Di Ma

《秦川抒怀》

Katelyn Weng, dizi  
Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

***Intermission***

*A Stalk of Flower* (1982)

Tongxiang Ren

《一枝花》

Arr. by Shiye Zhang

Beitong Liu, erhu  
Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

*Peach Blossoms Crossing* (2011)

Yue Chen

《桃花渡》

Arr. by Cheng Jin Koh

Katelyn Weng, xiao  
Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

*Biryani* (2023)

Chenwei Wang

《印度香饭》

Katelyn Weng, dizi  
Beitong Liu, erhu  
Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa  
Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

Dunhuang (2009)

Ying Jiang

《敦煌》

Katelyn Weng, dizi  
Beitong Liu, erhu  
Zoey Xiaoyan Luo, pipa  
Cheng Jin Koh, yangqin

## Program Notes

### *Four Cantonese Melodies* (1998) 《广东音乐四首》

“Four Cantonese Melodies” consists of four iconic early 20th-Century Cantonese pieces, “Dragon Boat Race,” “In Celebration of Good Times,” “The Full Moon” and “The Thunder in Drought.” Arranged by Hua Wu for China National Traditional Orchestra in 1998, it received its premiere in 1999 in Wiener Musikverein and is now a staple of Cantonese orchestral music. This version for quartet, reduced by Cheng Jin, preserves the original lively and vibrant essence exuded by Cantonese music.

### *Jiangnan Charm* (2001) 《江南风韵》

Written by renowned composer Guanren Gu in 2001 for dizi, erhu, guzheng and ensemble, “Jiangnan Charm” merges thematic elements from one of the eight great Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo tunes, “Joyful Song,” with Jiangsu (Yangzhou) folk melody, “Pulling Up a Reed Catkin.” The graceful elegance of the region’s water town and its cultural riches are vividly painted through the winding and spirited melodies.

### *Give Me a Rose* (1961) 《送我一支玫瑰花》

“Give Me a Rose” was originally composed for pipa by Fandi Wang based on a Uyghur folk song about romantic affection. Tonight’s version is a special adaptation of pipa musician Qiang Zhang’s arrangement for pipa duet, as reconceived by Beitong and Zoey for erhu and pipa. Animated rhythms and lively melodies vibrantly convey youthful yearning and passion towards love.

### *Earthly Contemplations* (1999) 《思凡》

“Earthly Contemplations” is inspired by the anonymous Ming dynasty Kunqu opera 《思凡•双下山》 “Longing for the Mortal World: Double Descent.” In this excerpt, a lonely young nun pines for worldly life and descends from the mountain. On the way, she encounters a young monk who also escaped from his own circumstances. Budding youthful, indistinct affection stirred in them, which ultimately remains in ambiguity and fantasy. Refined compositional techniques and varied timbres are employed to convey such inner sensibility, suggesting the characters’ fluttering hearts and hopes for love in a pure and spiritual manner. Yao Chen’s works often reflect diverse dimensions of creativity and thought, and the search for transcendence and timelessness is often a key process in his music.

### *Expressions of Qinchuan* (1980) 《秦川抒怀》

“Expressions of Qinchuan,” composed by dizi musician Di Ma in 1980, draws influences from Shaanxi musical art forms. Bold and impassioned, the music expresses fervent love and nostalgia of the Qinchuan (Qin Plain) region. Qinchuan, also referred to as “800 li of Qin land,” was part of Guanzhong Basin, bordered by the Qin

mountains and the Loess Plateau in Shaanxi Province. As the traditional heartland of the ancient Qin state, it was one of the most historically significant regions of Chinese civilization. The piece highlights *wanwanqiang* (literally “bowl melody”), a performance style popularized by shadow puppet play of Shaanxi Province, and *qinqiang*, a traditional form of Chinese opera also with roots in Shaanxi Province characterized by a distinctly mournful sound attributed to historical themes of loss, tragedy and exile. To evoke *wanwanqiang*, the dizi imitates the unique, exaggerated pressure vibrato of the lead instrument, banhu, by employing finger vibrato. The penetrating nature of these qualities deeply exhibit the rich legacy of Northwest Chinese culture.

### *A Stalk of Flower* (1982) 《一枝花》

Adapted for erhu by Shiye Zhang in 1982, “A Stalk of Flower” was originally written for suona by famed suona musician and composer, Tongxiang Ren, in 1959 based on Shandong *bangzi* (“clapper opera”). Shandong *bangzi* is a regional opera with roots specifically in the southwest region of the province. In the first slow section, the music exhibits the “weeping tone” characteristic common in Shandong *bangzi* and other regional operas, expressing deep sorrow in a noble manner. This is large glissando techniques of the zhuihu, a unique local instrument of Shandong province. This is contrasted with a livelier and more optimistic segment, which imbues this “weeping tone” feature with playfulness and whimsicality. Symbolic and reflective, the music depicts the composer’s thoughts regarding the hardships faced by people during the war and the dawn of a new era at that time: “the old society, the roadside flowers, battered by the wind and rain; a new society, a stalk of flower, cherished by workers, farmers, and soldiers.”

## *Peach Blossoms Crossing* (2011) 《桃花渡》

“Peach Blossoms Crossing” is one of the ten pieces released by dizi and xiao performer Yue Chen in the album “Expedition” in 2011. The soulful, singing quality of the xiao elicits a romantic, picturesque landscape of a lake surrounded by peach blossoms. Underpinning such poetic beauty are feelings of sorrow and entanglement—like petals that fall endlessly into the waters, the longing is also perpetual. This version, for xiao and yangqin, is transcribed and arranged by Cheng Jin.

## *Biryani* (2023) 《印度香饭》

“Biryani” (also spelt “briyani” or “biriyani”) is an Indian rice dish flavored with ghee and spices. It is popular throughout the Indian subcontinent and its diaspora, including Singapore. To reflect the Persian origin of biryani, a Hindustani rāga (melodic mode) originating from Persia was chosen— the rāga Yaman. Also named “Kalyāṇ” (meaning “auspicious”), its counterpart in Carnatic music is the rāga Kalyāṇi. (Coincidentally, there is a type of biryani also named “Kalyāṇi”.) This rāga corresponds to the Western Lydian scale, but with an important characteristic—the tonic never ascends stepwise to the 2nd scale degree, and the 5th never ascends stepwise to the 6th scale degree.

The piece begins with an ālāp (slow introduction) where the Dadi plays nuanced melodic figurations over tānpūrā-like drone notes by the Pipa and Daruan (adapted for yangqin in this version). In the fast section, the 12-beat tala cycle Ektāl is maintained by a rhythmic ostinato bass that imitates tablā performances of this tāla. The music alternates between recurring tutti sections in regular meter and solo sections in cross-rhythm with the tāla. The rhythms become increasingly complex, driving the piece to a climactic ending.

“Biryani” was originally commissioned as a Western classical wind quartet by K □ U in 2020.

### *Dunhuang* (2009) 《敦煌》

In Northwest China, specifically Gansu Province, an ancient city sits quietly in the Gobi desert. Named Dunhuang, it served as a significant cultural and commercial hub on the Silk Road. As the main inspiration behind Ying Jiang’s “Dunhuang” written in 2009, tonalities of the Western Regions, which included areas historically part of the Silk Road, are employed. The first section conveys the faraway wonder of the city, where the mysterious Mogao Caves, illuminated by Buddhist murals, come to mind. The ensuing lively section, passionate and dance-like, reignites the city’s vibrant, flourishing life from 4000 years ago.

*Program notes edited by Cheng Jin*

### **Bios**

**Katelyn Weng** began her musical journey learning piano at the age of six and Chinese flute at the age of eight, studying under Mr. Yuyuan Xu. She became a member of CMENY in 2010. After winning first place in the Eastern Music category in the SINO-US International Campus Cultural Arts Festival in Beijing in 2011, she returned to attend the CCTV Colorful Gala in 2013. She is a graduate of Fiorello H. LaGuardia Arts High School in Manhattan and has a doctorate in pharmacy from St. John’s University.

**Beitong Liu** is an accomplished erhu musician celebrated for her versatility and artistry of erhu playing across a wide range of musical genres, including traditional Chinese music, jazz, contemporary works,

improvisation, musical theater, and opera. She has performed at Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Fisher Center, and the Chinese Embassy in NYC and Washington, D.C. A Bespoke Fellow for 2023–24, she won First Prize in the 2024 Singapore Star Erhu Competition and was the featured erhu performer in Shanghai Sonata at Vassar College. She is co-founder of Bright Moon and Echoes of China and teaches in the “Learn to Teach, Culture Connect” program, fostering cultural exchange through music.

**Zoey Xiaoyan Luo** is a highly acclaimed young pipa musician actively engaged in the New York music scene. She began learning Pipa in young age in China, and during her studies in the United States, She participated in numerous performances at prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Hudson Hall, the Consulate General of China in New York and Washington, D.C., University of Maryland, and Vassar College. Her expressive and delicate performance style has earned widespread acclaim. She is also the co-founder of the Echoes of China Ensemble and an active member of the Bard East-West Ensemble.

Singaporean composer and yangqin performer **Cheng Jin Koh** strives to transcend cultural boundaries with imaginative storytelling and music making. She was most significantly a grant winner of the New York State Council on the Arts and commissioned composer for the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art centennial celebrations and Singapore International Violin Competition. As a yangqin musician, she was one of the youngest grand prize winners of the Singapore Chinese Music Competition and has performed with ensembles such as the Bard Chinese Ensemble, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Dongfeng Liu Jazz Band, among others. A member of the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York, she also regularly premieres her own music, which often involve multicultural and interdisciplinary explorations.

## Upcoming Events

Voices of Ukraine  
Sunday, March 30, 3:00pm

Skidmore String Festival  
w/ Sphinx Virtuosi  
Saturday, April 5, 7:30pm

Skidmore String Festival w/Sphinx  
Virtuosi and Skidmore Students  
Sunday, April 6, 2:00pm

Senior Bass Recital: August DuClos  
Friday, April 11, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Brass &  
Woodwind Ensembles  
Saturday, April 12, 3:00pm  
in Wilson Chapel

Young Kim & Skidmore Pianists  
Saturday, April 13, 4:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:  
Vocal Soul Collective  
Tuesday, April 15, 7:00pm  
in Filene Recital Hall

Senior Voice Recital:  
Mary Timmons  
Saturday, April 19, 1:00pm

Senior Recital: Alex Ciardullo  
Saturday, April 19, 4:00pm

Senior Voice Recital:  
Rhea Fitzpatrick  
Saturday, April 19, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Orchestra  
Tuesday, April 22, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Chorus  
Thursday, April 24, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:  
String Ensembles  
Friday, April 25, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:  
Guitar Ensemble  
Friday, April 25, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert:  
Global Music Showcase  
Saturday, April 26, 1:00pm  
In Thomas Amphitheater

Skidmore in Concert:  
Concert Band  
Sunday, April 27, 1:00pm

Senior Guitar Recital:  
Rimmele Wood  
Sunday, April 27, 4:00pm

Senior Recital: Arielle Lam  
(Piano & Voice)  
Sunday, April 27, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Big Band + Cuban  
Music Ensemble  
Monday, April 28, 7:00pm

Skidmore in Concert: Small Jazz Ensembles  
+ Guitar  
Wednesday, April 30, 7:00pm