

Yi-Chen Chang  
*composition*

Recital in partial fulfillment of the  
Doctor of Musical Arts degree, 2024  
Student of John Mallia

Saturday, November 24, 2024  
8:00 p.m.  
Eben Jordan

## PROGRAM

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*All compositions are by Yi-Chen Chang*

### ***Persian Mood*** (2022)

Xinyi Liao, soprano saxophone  
Juchen Wang, alto saxophone  
Zhikang Chen, tenor saxophone  
Ethan Shen, baritone saxophone

### ***Chao-Du*** (2024)

Corinne Luebke-Brown, Jackie Hu, soprano  
Bailee Green, mezzo-soprano  
Nicholas Ottersberg-Enriquez, baritone

### ***DSCH*** (2022)

Anne Chao, flute  
Phoebe Kuan, clarinet  
Tsu-Ting Chen, violin  
Chi-Jui Chen, viola  
Lian Yo, cello

### ***Evaporation and Transpiration*** (2024)

Multimedia

### ***Xiao He Chasing Han Xin Under the Moon*** (2024)

Kai-Min Chang, piano

*Green Oyster Lady* (2019)

Yi-Chen Chang, voice  
Pang-Yi Lee, yuechin (Taiwanese lute)

*Pipa Classic Re-composition Suite* (2020)

Moonlit Night  
The Order of General Manchu  
Gyr Falcon Seizes a Swan

Pang-Yi Lee, pipa

*Breaking Through the Battle Formation* (2024)

Yi-Chen Chang, violin  
Pang-Yi Lee, Nanguan pipa  
Yizhe Jiang, drums

### ***Persian Mood (2022)***

This piece is inspired by the Persian traditional music form *dastgāh*, which allows the rotation and mutation of note groups to display and evolve in a kaleidoscope-like texture through the selected combination of rhythmic patterns. The realization of a *dastgāh* is made possible through sequencing a series of pre-established pitch and rhythm patterns to construct the modal organization of a musical piece. This manner of sequential organization is called *gushe*, meaning small melodic cells. The performance of a *dastgāh* has to be introduced by *gushe*, and the entire execution of *dastgāh* is based on the capacity of *gushe*. This piece features eight variations on the theme of *gushe* (used at the beginning to feature the chosen notes that represent the *dastgāh*). The intervallic structure of the melody is divided by the pre-established orders of *gushe* through the pitch class set of cell groups: A [8, e, 0] and B [1, 2, 5]. The prime form of both sets is [0, 1, 4], which serves as the primary note group. The intervallic contents of Group C [6, 7], D [9, 4], and E [3, t] are minor second, perfect fourth, and perfect fifth, which serve as the joint materials for the primary group to construct the *dastgāh* in this work.

This work opens with Groups A and B's original pitch class set, joined by the intervallic shape of Groups C, D, and E. These sets' pitch organization is modal and serial combined, creating the sonic impression between abstraction and identical exoticism. Each variation is derived from the *gushe* material to develop the *dastgāh*, employing different compositional tactics and concepts such as Boulez's frequency group, Messiaen's irreversible rhythm, the arithmetical superimposition, augmentation, and diminution in Indian Tala rhythmic system, as well as the note gestures of Ligeti's net-structure principle.

### ***Chao-Du (2024)***

The title comes from Chinese Daoism and Buddhism, often associated with rituals through mantra-chanting prayers that deliver the transcendence effect of blessing the deceased for a better realm or guiding a spirit to be liberated from suffering. In this piece, the Chao-Du effect conceives a metaphorical meaning, urging human civilization to find its need for the awakening and restoration of consciousness from the current spiritually corrupted world caused by monetary-driven materialism and pseudo-advanced technology.

The texts are in Chinese and Sanskrit and originated from *The Rebirth Mantra of Pure Land Buddhism*, *The Original Vow of Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha*, *The Great Light Mantra*, *The Liberation upon Hearing Mantra*, and *The Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Deliverance Mantra*.

This a cappella quartet setting is for three female voices (soprano, mezzo-soprano) and one male baritone voice. The technique requires plant tone singing with little vibrato, intoned, and un-pitched singing to emulate the religious nuances. The structure of this piece is divided into three parts. The first part is built upon pentatonic-related modal harmony, corresponding to the Mandarin verses, and its texture takes after the shape of the conventional counterpoint. Part Two has a distinctive repetitive minimal ambiance, which recalls the character of religious

chanting. The sonority of minor seconds channels the path from suffering to the transcended state. Part Three adopts the modern techniques of unpitched speaking and intoned singing. Its style of *appoggiatura* has a squash racket-like characteristic, starting from the ornamented note, leaping unto the ornamental note, and bouncing back to the ornamented note, then sustained. Towards the end, the melisma emulates the virtuosic technique of Hindustani classical singing. Due to this concert's time limit, this evening's performance presents a shortened version.

### ***DSCH* (2022)**

This piece is titled *DSCH*, a musical motif used by the composer Dmitri Shostakovich. It's a musical cryptogram emulating the manner of the Bach motif (the note names of the motif are Bach's initials), consisting of *D*, *E-flat*, *C*, *B natural* (or in German pronunciation as "De-Es-Ce-Ha"), thus standing for the German translation of Shostakovich's initials: *D. Sch.*

B-C-D-Eb is also a musical signifier that drew the attention of the greatest composers of the 19th and 20th centuries to reinvent or go beyond the conventional writing of tonal music. Its symmetrical characteristic is adaptable to the variety of pitch set combinations as well as the formation of interesting scales such as octatonic scales. Juxtaposing minor/major second, it resonates with the suppression and tension in a turbulent world that is still valid today. This work elaborates on the colorful characters of this motif. It is omnipresent throughout the piece in its original form and variants. The texture, harmony, rhythmic characters, and other features also pay tribute to Shostakovich.

There are three sections in this work. Each section is connected through a pre-recorded electronic passage. The thematic material of the first one comes from the opening of Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet, Mvt. 1 (measure 1-26), a signature piece featuring Shostakovich's *DSCH* motif. And the second one comes from measure 153-192 of the same movement. According to the score, String Quartet No. 8 is dedicated to "the victims of fascism and the war"; his son Maxim interprets this as a reference to the victims of all totalitarianism, while his daughter Galina says that the composer dedicated it to himself. All three descriptions are reflective and relevant to the meaning of this work.

### ***Evaporation and Transpiration* (2024)**

This electronic work juxtaposes the sounds of software samplers and acoustic live recordings of Western and Chinese instruments. The chosen live performance recordings of the composer's Chinese orchestral pieces are edited, remixed, and re-imaged to coordinate with the electronic composition, which produces the semi-mechanical sonic perception. I intended to blur the boundaries of electronic and acoustic music to resonate with the photographic material of nature, artificial facts, and human acts. On top of these features, the selected works by May Sun stand out to conclude and extend the metaphoric messages of all the elements in this piece. The title draws from one of the artist's works: *Evapotranspiration*.

May Sun is an artist with a biochemical engineering background. She keeps her

studio at SOWA, an art and design district in Boston. Her works have been exhibited in the renowned galleries of Greater Boston and New York and juried into many national shows. [www.maysunarts.com](http://www.maysunarts.com) Instagram: maysunarts

### ***Xiao He Chasing Han Xin Under the Moon (2024)***

The title of this piece refers to a famous scene in *Beiguan*, a traditional opera genre in Taiwan, which gradually took shape after being introduced to Taiwan in the 18th century from Guangdong and other northern regions of China. This piece adopts the melodic elements from the narrative singing form *Xiqu*, a subtype of *Beiguan*, which depicts a famous historical story from the Han Dynasty (early 2nd century B.C.). At the end of the Qin Dynasty, Liu Bang (the founder and the first emperor of Han Dynasty) led a rebellion to overthrow Qin. Xiao He, who was then Liu Bang's prime strategist, recognized the talents of Han Xin and recommended him to Liu Bang three times, but Liu Bang was reluctant to employ him. Frustrated, Han Xin decided to leave. Upon hearing of Han Xin's departure, Xiao He, fearing the loss of such a valuable talent, chased after him despite the arduous journey, persuading him to return. Xiao He recommended him to Liu Bang once again, leading to Han Xin's eventual appointment as a commander. This piece depicts the scene of this event where Xiao He, under the moonlight, chased after Han Xin to persuade him to return.

This piano solo piece draws inspiration from my Erhu concerto, *The Chasing of Han Xin*, commissioned in 2014 by the Taipei Chinese Orchestra. There are four sections: Prelude, Self-Narration, Accepting Xiao He's Request Under the Moon, and Returning to the Han Camp. The work is intricate and rich, aiming to break away from the typical melodic softness associated with pentatonic scale flavor in modern compositions. It incorporates more percussive effects presented through the piano to emulate the sounds of the percussion group in Chinese opera. This piece also integrates the elements of blues, swing rhythms, and jazz harmonies, adding a cross-over, modern auditory perspective to portray the bold, unrestrained character of the figures in the story.

### ***Green Oyster Lady (2019)***

The melody of *Green Oyster Lady* is derived from *Taitung Tune*, a southern Taiwan folk ballad from the Hengchun region. Its style blends the *Pingpu Tune*, which mixes influences from the indigenous peoples of Taiwan and the early Han settlers. In the early days, many people from Hengchun moved to Taitung for farming. In 1970, the theme song for the TV drama *Green Oyster Lady* adopted the tune, expressing a woman's hardship by harvesting oysters. Initially lamenting her plight, the song shifts to an uplifting message, encouraging perseverance with the belief that hard work will lead to success. Since the song aired alongside the drama, it became popular. It reflected the aspiration and confidence of the Taiwanese people, who believed that hard work could lift them out of poverty, especially during the era of stable economic growth.

However, the popularized version of *Green Oyster Lady* lost the traditional charm of the ballad, replaced by standardized electronic sounds and rigid pentatonic

arrangements. This formulaic approach was applied to most Taiwanese dialect pop songs, leading to a perception of these songs as representing the music of the lower social strata, further accelerating the decline of the dialect narrative singing tradition. This arrangement incorporates the moon lute, the primary accompanying instrument of Taiwanese narrative folklore, freeing the tune from the rigidity of the popular version. It retains only the lyrics while recreating and blending traditional ballads with the elements of Taiwanese opera. The aim is to present the tune's essence in a way that aligns more closely with the folk traditions, challenging the stereotype that Taiwanese dialect songs are vulgar and solely represent lower social class.

Other women's husbands wear fancy clothes,  
But my man sells fresh oysters.  
Everyone calls me the oyster lady,  
If you want oysters, there's no need to worry, we've got plenty.

Other women's husbands have decent looks,  
But my man's eyes are strained from hard work.  
Being born beautiful or not, there's no need for complaints,  
They say an ugly man makes a steady living.

Other women's husbands live in Western-style houses,  
But my man sleeps in a simple, earthen home.  
Whether fate is kind or harsh, it doesn't matter,  
If you work hard, success will come.

*Da-Cheng Guo*

### ***Pipa Classic Re-composition Suite (2020)***

The pipa's prototype originated in Central Asia, and it was introduced to China around the 6th century. The vertically held pipa we see today was developed during the Ming Dynasty in the 16th century. Since then, the traditional pipa repertoire gradually took shape. By the 18th century, during the Qing Dynasty, the pipa matured into a solo instrument, marking the beginning of the development of different schools of playing, each with its own traditional scores and unique playing techniques. Initially, like most folk music, the pipa's repertoire was passed down orally from master to student. However, starting in the 1920s, China underwent significant changes, and the concepts of Western music theory, such as notation, harmony, and aesthetics, began to have a sweeping influence. This led to a shift where scores, initially served as performance references, became fixed canons, of which not a single note was allowed to be altered. From then on, all performers were required to play strictly according to the preserved scores of the five major schools, leading to the loss of the oral tradition, which stagnated the performing style due to a rigid adherence to different schools' specific annotations.

This new arrangement of *Moonlit Night* and *The Order of General Manchu* is based

on my pipa performance methodology published in 2017 at the Taipei National University of the Arts. The pieces were developed by extracting the core notes from traditional scores and exploring the connection and differences between contemporary pipa interpretation styles and traditional methods. Through this approach, I recreated the pipa techniques, rhythmic and melodic characteristics in a personalized way, retaining the musical spirit of the original scores while also expressing the performer's own interpretative features and thoughts on these works. *Gyrfalcon Seizes a Swan* is the oldest model of the pipa classic repertoire, remaining one of the scarce pieces that allows room for the performer's self-interpretation. I place the selected excerpts from this work to conclude the aesthetic goal of the vibrant ancient tradition this re-compositional suite aims to achieve.

### ***Breaking Through the Battle Formation (2024)***

Throughout its nearly 1,800-year history in China, the pipa has experienced two periods of flourishing development. The first was during the Sui and Tang dynasties, resulting in the fervent introduction of the pipa from the Western Regions and its fusion with Chinese culture. *Breaking Through the Battle Formation* is one of the most representative court music repertoires of the Tang Dynasty, celebrating the most powerful emperor, Taizhong (also known as King Qin during his prince period). Its fame spread so widely that even the Indian King Harsha once asked the famous Buddhist Master Xuanzang: "I have heard of the song and dance called 'Qin King's Battle Formation Music.' Who was this Qin King?"

The only surviving score is preserved in the Shōsōin of Japan, most famously played on the five-string pipa. Although Chinese and Japanese scholars have provided authoritative interpretations, no one knows how to accurately perform these Tang Dynasty scores. The pipa of that era has long been lost, with only its prototype preserved intact in Japan. Within China, the musical style closest to the music and instruments of the Tang era is Nanguan (Nanyin), which migrated to Quanzhou, Fujian, in the southeast, after enduring multiple wars.

This piece adopts the elements from Nanguan pipa, Japanese Satsuma biwa, and the *Breaking Through the Battle Formation* score for five-string pipa to create an imagined scene of the historical remnants with modern sensibilities. It incorporates Western instruments like the violin and a drum-set that imitates Chinese row drums and Central Asian hand drums. With a nostalgic and weathered tone, it pays homage to the once-revered splendor that remains only in historical records. – *Yi-Chen Chang*



## **Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC**

*all programs subject to change*

Visit [necmusic.edu](http://necmusic.edu) for complete and updated concert information

**Blake Hetherington**, *soprano* (BM '24)

Student of Jane Eaglen

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

**Phoebe Kuan**, *clarinet* (MM)

Student of Andrew Sandwick

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Gustavo Barreda**, *percussion* (MM)

Student of Will Hudgins and Daniel Bauch

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Grace Clarke**, *French horn* (MM)

Student of Jason Snider

*Sunday, November 24, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Eli Geruschat**, *percussion* (MM '24)

Student of Daniel Bauch and Will Hudgins

*Monday, November 25, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Adria Ye**, *piano* (GD '24)

Student of Wha Kyung Byun

*Monday, November 25, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

**Cynthia Chih-yu Tseng**, *collaborative piano* (DMA)

Student of Cameron Stowe and Pei-Shan Lee

*Monday, December 2, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall*

**Connor Willits**, *percussion* (MM)

Student of Will Hudgins and Daniel Bauch

*Wednesday, December 4, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Hannah Chaewon Kim**, *violin* (GD '24)

Student of Soovin Kim and Donald Weilerstein

*Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 8:00 p.m.,  
Carriage House Violins, 236 Huntington Ave., Boston*

## Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

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**Ssu-Hsuan Sandy Li**, *collaborative piano* (MM '24)  
Student of Pei-Shan Lee and Cameron Stowe  
*Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall*

**Isabella Butler**, *percussion* (BM)  
Student of Daniel Bauch and Matthew McKay  
*Friday, December 6, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Max Zhenren Zhao**, *cello* (BM '24)  
Student of Lluís Claret  
*Friday, December 6, 2024 at 8:30 p.m., Brown Hall*

**Sachin Shukla**, *viola* (GD '24)  
Student of Mai Motobuchi  
*Saturday, December 7, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Noah Silverman**, *French horn* (MM)  
Student of Michael Winter  
*Saturday, December 7, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Sarah McGuire**, *violin* (MM)  
Student of Ayano Ninomiya  
*Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 12:00 noon, Brown Hall*

**Valerie Curd**, *bassoon* (GD '26)  
Student of Richard Svoboda  
*Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Sianna Monti**, *mezzo-soprano* (BM '24)  
Student of Jane Eaglen and Carole Haber  
*Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Brown Hall*

**Daeun Hong**, *viola* (BM '24)  
Student of Nicholas Cords  
*Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall*

**Abigail Hope-Hull Michaels**, *oboe* (MM)  
Student of John Ferrillo  
*Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall*

**Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC**

*–continued*

**KeXin Tian**, *piano* (BM '24)

Student of Randall Hodgkinson

***Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall***

**Lily Stern**, *cello* (BM)

Student of Yeesun Kim

***Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 12:00 noon, Pierce Hall***

**Daniel Slatch**, *double bass* (BM '24)

Student of Donald Palma

***Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 4:00 p.m., Williams Hall***

**Felicia He**, *piano* (MM)

Student of Wha Kyung Byun and Alessio Bax

***Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall***

**Luther Warren**, *viola* (DMA)

Student of Kim Kashkashian

***Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall***

**Sepehr Davalloukhounghar**, *collaborative piano*, EM grant project

*“Persian Vocal Music”*

***Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall***

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