

# Music Librarian Heads East to Build Collection

This June, I traveled to China, South Korea and Taiwan with Shih Hui Chen, professor and chair of music composition and theory, and Kurt Stallmann, associate professor of music composition and theory, to collect contemporary Asian art music for the library's collection. Our goal was to build a collection of music that would serve as a resource for Chen's new fall class on contemporary and cross-cultural Asian music, and also as a further source of musical inspiration for Rice composers, performers and music scholars.

The idea for the project came up in spring 2015, during Common Practice 21C, a three-day music festival organized by Chen. The festival presented musical works that combined traditional music and instruments from several Asian cultures with Western musical ideas and instruments, as a way to promote musical collaboration between cultures and expand perspectives. Chen, born and raised in Taiwan, has a broad perspective as she was trained entirely in the Western musical tradition. After living for almost 30 years in the United States, her completely Western training began to seem strange to her, so in 2010 and 2013 she returned to Taiwan on a Fulbright Scholarship to study indigenous music.

I asked Chen if there might be music materials best acquired by traveling to Asia, because while Fondren Library currently collects the music of a number of Asian composers, only the most famous are represented by the major American and European publishers. Many other Asian composers working in Asia are well-known and respected there, but are unknown in the Western half of the world. We decided to focus on these composers and thus create a special collection that would not only be useful to current Rice musicians but also unique in this part of the world.

In early 2016, Chen and Stallmann, along with a group of their current and former composition students, presented a concert of new music for traditional Chinese instruments, played by the Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra at the National Concert Hall

in Taipei. The American composers also lectured about their music at the conservatories in Shanghai and Beijing and at a symposium at the Taiwan Normal University's Graduate Institute of Ethnomusicology. Between these engagements, Chen and I made arrangements to meet individually with working composers in the area, to tell them about our project and acquire as much of their music as we could. During our visit, a very eminent Korean composer gave us an impromptu lesson on why Koreans aren't well educated about their national music. In all, we met with 20 composers in Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul and Taipei and returned to Rice with over 200 scores and CDs that would have been difficult or even impossible to identify and obtain from the United States.

More information on Chinese traditional instruments and their use in new music can be found in this helpful post at the New Music Box website, at <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/new-music-for-chinese-instruments/>, written by Fulbright scholar Jacob Sudol.

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