

DATELINE: TAIPEI, TAIWAN

## SHIH-HUI CHEN

*Shepherd School of Music*

Shih-Hui Chen, an associate professor of composition and theory, is in her 14th year of teaching at Rice. A native of Taiwan, she has been educated, trained and professionally employed in the U.S. for 30 years. From this deep immersion in Western music came a renewed longing for and interest in traditional Taiwanese music.

For the past two decades, Chen has worked to merge Taiwanese musical materials and conceptions with structural and technical ideas that have evolved through her study of Western music.

Traditional and aboriginal Taiwanese music has an entirely different notation system and ethnic point of view than Western music, she said. "In my years of Western music training, I had never experienced music this way, not even in my studies of 20th-century music, where articulations and other parameters are at least as important as the pitches."

Chen's research is motivated not only by a belief in preserving traditional forms, "but also because I strongly believe that digital communications technology in our time has lifted perceived barriers between countries and continents, bringing humanity closer together and blurring the lines between individual cultures."

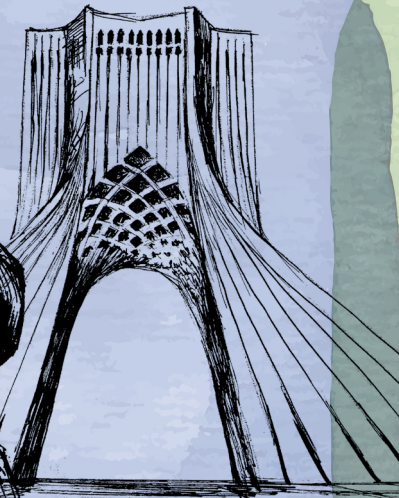
Chen recently spent two nonconsecutive years in Taiwan studying indigenous music and Nanguan music, a traditional form of Chinese music. The first year was taken as a sabbatical with additional support from a Fulbright grant; the second was a professional leave with support from a Taiwan Fellowship grant.

Chen's compositions reflect her deep interest in combining Eastern and Western musical aesthetics. For example, a collaboration with anthropologist Hu Tai-Li on the documentary "Returning Souls," about the aboriginal Amis tribe, resulted in a series of concerts across the United States. A current work-in-progress, "Messages From a Formosan Paiwan Village," is a 50-minute storytelling musical drama.

Back at Rice, Chen is organizing a Chinese Music Festival to take place in spring 2015, which will include concerts, demonstrations, master classes and more.

"Using musical compositions or events to create a broader sense of international community is an important goal," Chen said. "It is my ultimate hope that through mutual understanding and combined efforts, a new world musical identity will be formed that breaks down the traditional boundaries separating Asia from the West."

*The Sir Duncan  
Rice Library at the  
University of Aberdeen*



*Azadi Tower in  
Tehran and  
statue of Persian  
poet Ferdowsi*



*Northern-style  
Taiwanese  
instruments*

