

WEDNESDAYS@7

# FORMOSA QUARTET

APRIL 20 @ 7PM  
CONRAD PREBYS CONCERT HALL



UC SAN DIEGO  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

UC San Diego  
Division of Arts & Humanities

CO-SPONSORED BY THE  
CHUAN LYU ENDOWMENT IN TAIWAN STUDIES AT UCSD  
AND TAIWAN LECTURE SERIES AT UCSD

## **WEDS @ 7 – Formosa String Quartet**

April 20, 2016 - 7:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

*String Quartet No. 1 Op. 59* – Ludwig van Beethoven

*Intermission*

### *Returning Souls* – Shih-Hui Chen

Introduction: Sun, the Glowing Maiden  
Legend I: The Great Flood, The Descending Shaman  
Legend II: Head Hunting, the Ascending Stars  
Legend III: The Glowing Maiden, Returning Souls

### *Song Recollections* – Lei Liang

This concert is sponsored by:  
Chuan Lyu Endowment in Taiwan Studies at UC San Diego  
UC San Diego Taiwan Studies Lecture Series

## ***Returning Souls - Four Short Pieces on Three Formosan Amis Legends*** – Shih-Hui Chen

In 2010, under the auspices of a Fulbright Scholar grant, I had the good fortune to live in Taiwan for a year while studying music of the aboriginal people there and also a traditional form of Taiwanese music called Nanguan. As a visiting scholar at Academia Sinica, I collaborated with award winning anthropologist and filmmaker, Hu Tai-Li, on a film project titled *Returning Souls*. This film documents the recovery of lost tribal icons by the aboriginal Amis tribe and interweaves three of their cultural legends with modern day realities, including national land policies, religious belief, community identity and clan rivalries. The lost icons are three wooden pillars with carvings of Ami ancestors that were removed from their community in 1958 following a hurricane. Anthropologists feared the damaged poles would disintegrate so they brought them back to the Academia Sinica museum for display. The Ami believed that when the totem poles were taken, the souls of their ancestors were also taken away from their village. The film traces efforts by the young Ami tribe members to return these souls back to their village.

This piece was conceived at the same time as the film music for *Returning Souls*. It is my hope to someday pair these two works together by presenting the film after a performance of the concert work. The main melody of this project, taken from an improvised song by one of the tribal elders in the film, serves as an introduction and unifies the entire piece. Although I do not usually write programmatic pieces, it seemed particularly fitting for this project. Below, I provide the subtitles and brief plots of the legends that are also indicated in the score:

**Introduction: Sun: The Glowing Maiden:** An ancient ancestor of the Amis tribe gave birth to many children. The last child was “The Glowing Maiden,” a girl whose body glows (symbolizing the Sun).

**Legend I: The Great Flood: The Descending Shaman:** Sister & Brother are the only two humans to escape the Great Flood with their lives. They later marry and give birth to strange creatures like lizards, snakes, and frogs. In the end, a Descending Shaman brings blessings that allow the pair to give birth to normal humans.

**Legend II: Head Hunting: The Ascending Stars:** Two brothers are instructed by their father to head hunt someone who is spoiling their supply of fresh water. Later, they find out that they unknowingly behead their own father. Their mother becomes angry and accuses the brothers of a heinous act. The elder brother shows remorse. He stomps his foot, and his body sinks further and further into the ground while his spirit ascends to the sky and becomes stars.

**Legend III: The Glowing Maiden; Returning Souls:** In the film, although struggling with many obstacles, the young people in the Amis tribe uplift their own spirits as they recover their ancestor’s souls.

*Returning Souls, Four Short Pieces on Three Formosan Amis Legends* was commissioned by the Houston Arts Alliance through an Individual Artist Grant, funded by the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

– Shih-Hui Chen

**SHIH-HUI CHEN** was born in Taipei and came to the United States in 1982 to study for a master's degree from Northern Illinois University and a doctoral degree from Boston University. After receiving her DMA in Music Composition, Shih-Hui Chen took a position at the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University where she is currently professor of music composition. Ms. Chen has been awarded a number of grants, and her work has been performed internationally. In 2010, she received a Fulbright Fellowship to study traditional Nanguan music and music of the Taiwanese aboriginal people.

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*Song Recollections* is based on the folk music of Taiwanese aboriginal tribes which fascinated me ever since my friends from Taiwan introduced them to me. The songs that inspired this composition are: “Praying for a Rich Mallet Harvest” and “the Triumphal Rite Song” of the Bunun tribe, “Ghost Lake” of the Rukai tribe, “Drinking Song” of the Ami tribe, and “Lullaby” of the Yami tribe. It was premiered by the Formosa Quartet on March 29, 2016 at the San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA.

*Song Recollections* has been commissioned by Art of Élan for the Formosa Quartet, and has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund. It was also commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation, Library of Congress for The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky.

I would like to thank Professor Wen Chyouchu (溫秋菊) and Professor Nancy Guy for providing me recordings and information on the music during my study of the materials. – Lei Liang

**LEI LIANG** is a Chinese-born American composer whose works have been described as “hauntingly beautiful” by The New York Times. Winner of the 2011 Rome Prize, Lei Liang is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He was named a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Lei Liang was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, the Taipei Chinese Orchestra, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Scharoun Ensemble of the Berlin Philharmonic, and pipa virtuoso Wu Man. Lei Liang currently serves as professor of music and acting chair of the Music Department at the University of California, San Diego.

Winners of the First Prize and the Amadeus Prize at the London International String Quartet Competition in 2006, the **FORMOSA QUARTET** is “one of the very best quartets of their generation” (David Soyer, cellist of the Guarneri Quartet). Its debut recording on the EMI label was hailed as “spellbinding” (Strad Magazine) and “remarkably fine” (Gramophone), and the quartet has given critically acclaimed performances at the Ravinia Festival, the Caramoor Festival, the Library of Congress, the Da Camera Society of Los Angeles, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, Rice University, San Francisco State University, and Wigmore Hall in London. Formed in 2002 when the four founding members came together for a concert tour of Taiwan, the Formosa Quartet is deeply committed to championing Taiwanese music and promoting the arts in the land of its heritage.

The members of the Formosa Quartet are the founders and faculty members of the annual Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Hualien, Taiwan. Inaugurated in 2013 and modeled after American summer festivals such as Marlboro, Ravinia, the Taos School of Music, and Kneisel Hall, FCMF is the product of long-held aspirations and years of planning, and represents one of the quartet’s more important missions: to bring high-level chamber music training to talented young musicians in Taiwan and first-rate music to Taiwanese audiences.

In the 2015-2016 season, the Formosa Quartet continues a two-year residency with Art of Élan, a San Diego arts-presenting organization. As ensemble-in-residence, the Quartet is working with UC San Diego Professor of Composition Lei Liang to create a new piece based on music indigenous to the aboriginal tribes of Taiwan. The culmination of the two-year project was the premiere performance of the commission in Spring 2016 and looks ahead to a new disc of music inspired by Hungarian and Taiwanese folk traditions.

In its relatively brief existence, the Formosa Quartet’s active commissioning has contributed significantly to the 21st century’s string quartet literature. They premiered Taiwanese-American composer Shih-Hui Chen’s *Returning Souls: Four Pieces on Three Formosan Amis Legends* in 2014, and the Quartet’s recording of its first commission from Ms. Chen, *Fantasia on the Theme of Plum Blossom*, was released on the New World Records label in 2013. Other pieces recently written for the Quartet include three pieces by Dana Wilson - *Hungarian Folk Songs*, *The night of h’s*, and *Apart* - Wei-Chieh Lin’s *Pasibutbut*, and Thomas Oboe Lee’s *Piano Quintet* and *Jasmine Variations*.

The members of the Formosa Quartet – Jasmine Lin, Wayne Lee, Che-Yen Chen, and Deborah Pae – have established themselves as leading solo, chamber, and orchestral musicians. With degrees from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, and New England Conservatory, they have performed in major venues throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, and have been top prizewinners in prestigious competitions such as the Paganini, Primrose, Fischhoff, Naumburg, and Tertis competitions. As chamber musicians, they have appeared regularly at the Marlboro, Kingston, Santa

Fe, Ottawa, Ravinia, Crans-Montana, and Schiermonnikoog festivals, as well as at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, La Jolla Summerfest, the Seattle Chamber Music Society, and Open Chamber Music at Prussia Cove. They have held principal positions in the San Diego and Cincinnati Symphonies, and have taught at the University of Southern California, California State University Fullerton, Roosevelt University, Taos School of Music, Stanford University, McGill University, and the Juilliard School. In 2014 the Quartet became the faculty quartet-in-residence at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.

The Formosa Quartet forms an octet with violins Joseph Curtin (2001) and Andrea Guarneri (1662), an Enrico Catenari viola (1680), and a Vincenzo Postiglione cello (1885) on generous loan from the Arts and Letters Foundation.

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**JASMINE LIN** began violin studies at age four. Since then she has appeared as soloist with orchestras including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra of Brazil, Symphony Orchestra of Uruguay, Evergreen Symphony of Taiwan, and National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, and in recital in Chicago, New York, Nova Scotia, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Taipei. She was a prizewinner in the International Paganini Competition and took second prize in the International Naumburg Competition. The New York Times describes her as an “unusually individualistic player” with “electrifying assertiveness” and “virtuosic abandon.”

Violinist **WAYNE LEE**'s performance career reflects the full breadth and diversity of his musical interests. Foremost an active chamber musician, Mr. Lee has been since 2008 a member of the Manhattan Piano Trio, with whom he has performed prolifically throughout the United States and Europe. The Trio has been acclaimed as “outstanding” by the Washington Post and lauded as “a grand departure from the usual” by the News Herald. They recently added to their discography with the release of their third album, a disc of Schumann and Chopin trios, for the Marquis Classics label.

Taiwanese-American violist **CHE-YEN CHEN** has established himself as an active performer and educator. He is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet, recipient of the First-Prize and the Amadeus Prize winner of the 10th London International String Quartet Competition. Since winning the First-Prize in the 2003 William Primrose International Viola Competition and the “President Prize” of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, Chen has been described by the Strad Magazine as a musician whose “tonal distinction and essential musicality produced an auspicious impression” and by San Diego Union Tribune as an artist whose “most impressive aspect of his playing was his ability to find not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.”

Since her orchestral debut at age sixteen with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, **DEBORAH PAE** has enjoyed concerto appearances with Sinfonia Varsovia of Poland, Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, Ensemble Orchestral de Bruxelles, and the Westchester Philharmonic with conductors Vassily Sinaisky, Thomas Wilkins, Christian Arming, Augustin Dumay, and Itzhak Perlman. In 2014, she ventured into new territory, conducting and playing Haydn's Cello Concerto No.1 in C major with Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie at the Korean Cultural Center in Brussels, Belgium.

A black and white photograph of a city skyline at night, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated and their lights reflecting on the water in the foreground. The sky is dark, and the water shows a soft, blurred reflection of the city lights.

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