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## **New music uniting the sounds of East Asia, ancient and modern, February 15**

*Photos: This page, (L-R) PAN Project musicians Woonjung Sim, Kaoru Watanabe, Wang Ying-chieh, Jeffrey Roberts and Gamin. Photo courtesy of the artists. Next page (L-R): an erhu, a guqin and assorted piri.*

HANOVER, NH—Virtuosic, world-touring musicians from across East Asia come together to perform new music—including improvisation—synthesizing their traditions, ancient and modern, on [Wednesday, February 15, 7 pm](#), in Dartmouth College’s Rollins Chapel.



Called the [PAN Project](#) (from the Korean music-narrative tradition *p’ansori*, songs that gather people together), the ensemble consists of composer and sound artist [Jeff Roberts](#), who plays the seven-string, plucked *guqin* of China; [Gamin](#), one of Korea’s most celebrated players of the oboe-like *piri* as well as two other Korean wind instruments, the *taepyeongso* and *saengwhang*; Korean percussionist [Woonjung Sim](#); [Ying-chieh Wang](#), who plays the two-string, bowed

Taiwanese *erhu* or “spike fiddle”; and [Kaoru Watanabe](#), playing the *taiko* drums and *shinobue* flutes of Japan.

Together they’ll play a range of new music composed by themselves and using the traditional instruments as well as electronics including *Sugungga*, based on *p’ansori* about a dragon king, a turtle and a wily rabbit; a new take on *guqin* piece from Chinese Confucian tradition; a work drawing on Japanese *kabuki* and *noh* theater music; and an improvisatory work inspired by *Kangwon Arirang*, one of Korea’s best-known folk songs.

The goal of PAN is to create music based in East Asian traditions while creating a modern, global intercultural sound. Said Roberts to the blog [Curiousarts.ca](http://Curiousarts.ca), “Nowadays in the western countries, for example in North America, when East Asian musicians play with the western players, the direction of the improvisation tends to head more in a direction to the West. PAN Project endeavors to direct the focus of their improvisations to the music languages of East Asian cultures.”



The instruments themselves are among East Asia’s most expressive and long-lived. Looking a little like a dulcimer or pedal steel guitar, the *guqin* is a quiet instrument with a four-octave range; sounds are produced by plucking open strings, stopped strings, glissandos or sliding tones, and harmonics. Dating back 5,000 years, it’s been in its modern form about the past 2,000. The instrument was banned during China’s Cultural Revolution. The *piri* is a double-reed instrument made of bamboo that comes in different sizes and sound qualities, ranging from loud and nasal to quiet and soothing. The *erhu* is one of the most important Chinese instruments, with a history of more than 4,000 years. Although sometimes called “the Chinese violin,” it differs in many ways, including how it’s held, its base on the player’s lap or knee. The *erhu* is incredibly expressive, capable of imitating sounds from chirping birds to neighing horses, with a sound that can be tender, sonorous or grand.

More familiar to Western audiences are the Japanese *shinobue* flutes, which differ from their Western sisters mainly in the scales their holes are tuned to play; and the *taiko* drums, which comprise drums of many shapes and sizes.

PAN started with Roberts and Gamin, who met at a music festival and discovered a shared frustration in standard East-West musical collaboration. “We were disappointed with the attempt to make the intercultural thing happen, which always seemed to involve having the Asian musicians try to fit their playing into Western improvisational forms,” he said. Grants and fellowships enabled them to start working together and with other musicians, including a summer in Seoul and a residency last summer at [New Hampshire’s Avalock Farm Music Institute](#) and a more recent stint at Roberts’ home base, the University of Alberta. After Dartmouth, the group performs at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.

### About the artists

**Gamin**, the most celebrated *piri* artist of her generation, endeavors to push the traditions of *piri* and traditional Korean music into the modern day through the innovation of new sounds and sonorities on ancient yet powerful instrument. She is also a master of *taepyeongso* (double-reed, trumpet-like horn) and *saenghwang* (or mouth organ, called *sheng* in Chinese), and works in similarly innovative ways on these instruments. From 2000 to 2010, she was a principle member of the Creative Contemporary Gugak Orchestra at the National Gugak Center, the hub for training and preserving Korean traditional music. Having had solid training in *Jeongak* (Korean classical court music), Gamin also studied *sinawi* (the music of shaman rituals), as well as *sanjo* (improvisational solo genre).

Gamin has been active not only as a solo performer, but also as a performer in chamber ensembles and soloist with prestigious orchestras in Asia and the US. Her musical scope spans quintessential traditional Korean music, contemporary music and improvisation, in live concerts and recordings both in Korea and beyond. Recent achievements include invitations from German and French governmental organizations for performances in Paris, Strasbourg, Freiburg and Karlsruhe; and cross-cultural improvisation workshops and performances in New York City, with such world-acclaimed musicians as Jane Ira Bloom and Elliott Sharp. Her latest digital album, *Wind and Stone*, is a collection of collaborative improvisational works with some of the most prestigious musicians in New York City. In Korea, she holds the rank of *yisuja*, or official tradition bearer, of the “important intangible cultural properties” of classical court music, *piri* and *daechwita* (royal military music).

**Jeffrey Roberts** is a composer, improviser and sound artist working in interdisciplinary acoustic and electroacoustic contexts. His music explores relationships between different music styles and cultures. Described as “bewitching” and “delicately affecting” by the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Music Intelligencer*, Roberts’ music has been performed and commissioned worldwide by noted ensembles. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and other formidable grants, prizes and fellowships. Rooted in his studies in Beijing with *guqin* master Li Xiangting, he performs on *guqin* in solo and collaborative improvised contexts, often using sensor-interactive live electronics. As a sound artist, he specializes in interactive soundscape composition and improvisation that often integrate field recordings. Roberts founded and directs the Music Beyond The Moongate International Chamber Music Festival held in Beijing and has taught at Beijing Center for Chinese Studies, Tufts University Experimental College, and as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Composition at Williams College. He currently teaches in the Music and the East Asian Studies Departments at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada.

**Woonjung Sim** has been recognized nationwide for her talent and accomplishments as a percussionist. The winner of the World Music Award (2009) and Experimental Spirit Award (2010) of the 21st Century Korean Music Project Competition of the Korean government, she was an artist-in-residence in New York City in 2011, funded the Korean government, during which time she collaborated with other New York City musicians on concerts in a variety of venues. She also recorded and released an album with the members of the ensemble Janya, of which she is founder, principal player and composer, debuting at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. She has participated in the Asia Improvisation Arts Exchange annually since 2013. She began her formal musical training in Korean traditional percussion at the age of ten and also studied piano, flute, guitar and voice, lending her skills not only in Korean traditional music but also in theatrical music, contemporary music improvisation.

**Wang Ying-chieh** is a Taiwanese *erhu* artist who is the leader of the performance group Yunshuyachi and a music instructor at the University of Taipei, National Taiwan University of Arts, and Chinese Culture University. She previously served as principle *erhu* player at Taipei Chinese Orchestra. Wang is trained in both western classical and Chinese traditional music, having learned piano, violin and composition. She took up *erhu* at the age of eight. In recent years, Wang has focused on working with professionals from different artistic disciplines, co-creating concerts containing thematic and crossover elements. She has performed as an *erhu* soloist with esteemed European orchestras and chamber ensembles as well as in festivals in Asia and Europe. In 2016, Wang was featured in several TaiwanHong Kong cultural exchanges, including the Fifth Hong Kong Week in Taiwan and the 45th Hong Kong Arts Festival, giving a world premiere at the latter. In 2017, her projects include a commissioned series for Tout Pour la Musique Contemporaine in Paris and a six-month residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, to focus on musical creation and performance.

**Kaoru Watanabe** is a Grammy-nominated, Brooklyn-based composer and practitioner of the Japanese *taiko* drum and *shinobue* bamboo flutes, and is known for artfully combining traditional ritual and theater musics of

Japan with complex compositional and improvisational elements of jazz and other global musics. Watanabe was a member and artistic director of the iconic Japanese *taiko* performing arts group Kodo for close to a decade. Since leaving Kodo, Watanabe has collaborated with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble and MacArthur Fellow Jason Moran, and created music for Martin Scorsese's *Silence*. He has performed his compositions at such venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center and the Whitney Museum. He has taught courses at Princeton and Wesleyan universities, and was a faculty member at the Tanglewood Music Festival and the Silk Road Project's Global Musician Workshop at DePauw University. Moran said of him: "Kaoru Watanabe: a rare musician who traverses the traditional music forms both East and West, classical and contemporary, predetermined and improvisational. His expertise in taiko drumming and bamboo flutes gives his music both force with extreme delicacy. His superb musicianship makes him a joy to create with. He enriches any musical situation with his unique perspective."

[Download Word.doc press release and high-resolution photos](#)

## **CALENDAR LISTING**

### **PAN Project: New Improvisation from East Asia**

Founded by composer/musicians Jeff Roberts of the US and Gamin of Korea, PAN brings together masters of some of East Asia's most expressive and exciting traditional instruments to improvise music that spans boundaries of culture, tonality and ancient-versus-new. Featuring the seven-string plucked *guqin* and two-string bowed *erhu* of China, the oboe-like *piri* and percussion of Korea, and the *taiko* drums and *shinobue* flutes of Japan, the group performs at the Hop to kick off a US tour.

Wednesday, February 15, 7 pm

Rollins Chapel, Dartmouth College, Hopkins Center, Hanover NH

\$25, \$10 for Dartmouth students, \$17 for 18 and under

Information: [hop.dartmouth.edu](http://hop.dartmouth.edu) or 603.646.2422

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Founded in 1962, the Hopkins Center for the Arts is a multi-disciplinary academic, visual and performing arts center dedicated to uncovering insights, igniting passions, and nurturing talents to help Dartmouth and the surrounding Upper Valley community engage imaginatively and contribute creatively to our world. Each year the Hop presents more than 300 live events and films by visiting artists as well as Dartmouth students and the Dartmouth community, and reaches more than 22,000 Upper Valley residents and students with outreach and arts education programs. After a celebratory 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary season in 2012-13, the Hop enters its second half-century with renewed passion for mentoring young artists, supporting the development of new work, and providing a laboratory for participation and experimentation in the arts.