



Borderlands: Music on the Edge



Lucas Harris, lute

Wen Zhao, pipa

Ronnie Malley, oud



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Italy

Saltarello & Piva

Joan Ambrosio Dalza (fl. 1508)

Ottoman Empire

Kurdilhicazkar Longa
Hijaz Mandra

Sebuh Efendi (1828-1894)
Attr. Lavtaci Andon Efendi (fl. c1900)

Silk Road (Music for Emperors)

Dynasty

I: Song of Autumn Wind
II: Dance in Tang Dynasty
III: Silk & Bamboo Melody

Wen Zhao
Wen Zhao
Improvised after a traditional Jiangnan folk melody

INTERMISSION

Iberia

Tawshieh from Nuba Isbihan
Para discantar

Traditional Arab-Andalusian
Enríquez de Valderrábano (c1500 – c1557)

Xinjiang, Uyghur China

Capriccio in Cahargah
Send me a Rose

Wang Jinmei
Uyghur folk melody

North America

Tastar de corde
Journey Home
Zahma

Lucas Harris
Wen Zhao
Ronnie Malley

The Lute Legends Collective (Lucas Harris & Wen Zhao, directors)



Each member of our collective is a committed carrier of an ancient musical tradition, whether it be the virtuosic modal improvisation of the Middle East, the intricate polyphony of the European Renaissance and Baroque, or the picturesque musical depiction of nature from China. Though instruments such as the oud, lute, & pipa each have evolved a distinct set of techniques and sounds, the recognition that our beloved instruments are “long-lost cousins” invites us into a new kind of musical conversation based on mutual curiosity and friendship. The Lute Legends Collective is our way of reuniting our instruments in a cross-traditional musical experiment for the twenty-first century.

www.lutelegends.com



Lucas Harris, lute & co-director

Lucas Harris leads a busy freelancer's life as a lutenist, conductor, continuo player, teacher, lecturer, coach, researcher, and audio/video editor. His collection of nearly twenty plucked-string instruments includes various Renaissance & Baroque lutes/guitars as well as a theorbo, cittern, bandora, an 1831 Guadagnini guitar, and a 7-string electric guitar with a Floyd-Rose tremolo bar.

He discovered the lute during his undergraduate studies at Pomona College, where he graduated *summa cum laude*. He then studied early music at the Civica scuola di musica di Milano and at the Hochschule für Künste Bremen before beginning his freelancing career in New York City. For the past two decades he bases his activities in Toronto, where he serves as the regular lutenist for Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra. He is a founding member of the Toronto Continuo Collective, the Vesuvius Ensemble (dedicated to Southern Italian folk music), as well as the Lute Legends Collective. Lucas plays with many ensembles in Canada and the USA and has worked in recent years with the Helicon Foundation, the Smithsonian Chamber Players, The Newberry Consort, Les Délices, and Jordi Savall / Le Concert des Nations, and Early Music Vancouver. He teaches at the Tafelmusik Summer and Winter Baroque Institutes, Oberlin Conservatory's Baroque Performance Institute, and the Canadian Renaissance Music Summer School. Also a choral conductor, Lucas has been the Artistic Director of the Toronto Chamber Choir since 2014 and has developed and conducted nearly thirty themed concert programs for the TCC. He has also been a guest director for the Pacific Baroque Orchestra, the Ohio State University Opera Program, Les voix baroques, Atalante, and the Toronto Consort. Lucas's longstanding interest in women composers has resulted in many projects including the reconstruction of 12 solo-voice motets by Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (the edition is now available for free download at the Web Library for Seventeenth-Century Music).

www.lucasharris.ca

Wen Zhao, pipa & co-director

Wen Zhao is an acclaimed pipa virtuoso, “a sensitive and lyrical performer.” Born in Beijing, she began to learn the Pipa at the age of seven. She studied under the renowned pipa master Wang Fan Di at the China Conservatory of Music, and won first prize at the Beijing Youth National Instrument Competition. In 1990 Wen continued her musical journey in England, performing and leading Chinese music workshops throughout the U.K. Wen lives in Toronto since 1997 and teaches pipa at York University.

Wen has appeared at major ethnic music festivals worldwide, touring in China, Europe, Canada, and the USA, and has given solo recitals on many concert series and at universities. In recent years she has collaborated with some world’s top Western ensembles, including Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the Toronto Consort as well as other organizations dedicated to music education. She has also created several East-West music projects for Toronto’s Aga Khan Museum.

She has also been a key player in world premiere productions by Western opera companies, including Guo Wenjing’s *Feng Yi Ting* at the Luminato Festival and Alice Ping Yee Ho’s *The Lesson of Da Ji* with Toronto Masque Theatre.

Wen directs the China Court Trio which performs traditional music from the Qing dynasty using the haunting combination of pipa, guzheng, and dizi. The trio produced narrative concert projects about Marco Polo (with the Toronto Consort) and Matteo Ricci (with the Toronto Chamber Choir). Wen is especially honored to be one of the featured musicians for the CBC award-winning documentary film *The Four Seasons Mosaic*. The Toronto Star described her as “a virtuoso player who displayed her dexterity and percussive skills on the pipa,” while WholeNote magazine described her as “the Jimi Hendrix of the pipa.”



Ronnie Malley, oud

Ronnie Malley is a Palestinian-American multi-instrumentalist musician on oud, guitar, keyboards, and percussion, composer, theatrical performer, producer, playwright, educator, and executive director of Intercultural Music Production. He specializes in various musical styles from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and medieval Spain and has performed with several global artists and ensembles including Allos Musica, Apollo’s Fire, Diwan al-Han, EMMÉ, Huzam, Lamajamal, Lute

Legends, Mucca Pazza, Newberry Consort, Picoso, Omar Offendum, Surabhi Ensemble, University of Chicago Middle East Music Ensemble, and Yves Francois & Rocambu Jazz. Ronnie has worked on award-winning theatrical plays, films, and TV series including *The Band’s Visit* (Broadway, Tony Awards, Grammy Awards), *Mo* (Netflix), *The Jungle Book* (Disney, Goodman Theatre), *The New Mother* (Eleva Singleton). He has recorded on over twenty albums and has co-produced several works and staged productions including *American Griot* (Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Award 2020), *Little Syria*, *Ziryab*, *The Songbird of Andalusia*, and *The Andalusian Trail*. Ronnie was recipient of the 2023 Chamber Music America Michael Jaffee Visionary Award. He holds a BA in Global Music Studies from DePaul University and a MA in Languages (Arabic and Hebrew) from the University of Chicago, where he is currently a PhD student in Ethnomusicology. www.ronniemalley.com

Notes on the program:

Italy

It may come as a surprise that Renaissance Italy is the first of this program's cultural & geographic "borderlands." Yet it is no exaggeration to say that the Italian Renaissance wouldn't have happened without the influence of the Islamic world. Muslim scholars transmitted ancient Greek knowledge to Western scholars, and Islamic art and architecture styles can be seen in Renaissance Italy in the form of intricate geometric patterns and arabesques, which were used particularly in Florence and Venice.

Joan Ambrosio Dalza's **Saltarello & Piva** are a pair of dances found in one of the first books of lute music published in Venice, the city known for centuries as the "gateway to the East." The music is effectively a written-out improvisation over a drone. Imagine an open-air "jam session" around the year 1500 that might have included both Venetian and foreign musicians!

Ottoman Empire

Music of the Ottoman Empire was a synthesis of a sharing process between the Turks and the many minorities living amongst them, including the Byzantines, Greeks, Persians, Arabs, Jews, and Armenians. Our set presents instrumental compositions by three Ottoman composers in the tradition of *Türk sanat müzigi* (Turkish classical music). Note that in Ottoman society, surnames were not used. Instead, names indicated a person's profession and social status. 'Kemani' means violinist and 'Efendi' means 'master' or 'Esquire, connoting enhanced social status.

We begin with **Kurdili Hicazkar Longa** is by the Armenian composer Kemani Sebu Efendi. The piece is sometimes called *sırto*, the name of the rhythm, and longa is a form of upbeat instrumental music form derived from Eastern European and Roma folk music. The set closes with **Hicaz Mandra**, attributed to Lautaci Andon Efendi. "Hicaz" is again the piece's *makam* scale and "mandra" is the name of the melody's infectious 7/8 meter.

Silk Road (Music for Emperors)

China's geographic barriers caused it to exist in relative isolation for centuries, and yet Chinese culture was still influenced by her many foreign trade partners, including Europe and the Islamic world. Traders and artisans traveled back and forth along the Silk Road, bringing ideas and goods as well as instruments and music. The pipa likely evolved from instruments brought to China from Central Asia.

Though modern pipa players use metal strings played with plastic fingernails, the pipa was traditionally fitted with silk strings played with a plectrum or with the fingers (the instrument's name comes from the alternation of forward "pi" and backward "pa" plucking motions). For this set, Wen will remove her artificial nails and play on a special pipa fitted with silk strings, a "period instrument" experiment which is extremely rare for a modern pipa player.

Wen's **Dynasty** suite traces the history of the pipa through three of China's imperial dynasties. The opening duet for pipa and oud is inspired by the ancient poem *Song of Autumn Wind*. Both instruments imitate the plucked sound of the *guqin* (seven-stringed zither) sounding music from the Han dynasty

(206 BCE – 220 CE, the period of the ancient Silk Road). The second movement is an elegant pipa solo which presents *Nishang*, a favourite dance piece of emperors during the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). The suite closes with a group improvisation on the *Silk and Bamboo Melody*, a colorful and delicate folk tune from China's final Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Iberia / Andalusia

Iberia was indelibly shaped by Al-Andalus (711-1492), the Muslim caliphate ruled by the Umayyad dynasty. This period is sometimes referred to as *convivencia*, a time when Muslims, Christian, and Jews lived in relative peace in the different Moorish kingdoms of Iberia. The music of all three faiths inevitably mixed and influenced one another. It was during this period that the oud was brought to Iberia and became the grandfather of the European lute, which in the Medieval period was played more like an oud, with a plectrum and without frets. The change in musical style during the Renaissance inspired lutenists to add frets and to begin plucking with their fingers.

Tawshieh Nuba Isbihan is an instrumental composition from the Arab-Andalusian tradition originating in medieval Spain. It is an instrumental musical form often used as a prelude and interlude in the nuba, a classical musical suite with Arabic poetry. *Nuba* is a medieval Andalusian musical tradition still performed across North Africa, where it was brought by the ancestors of exiled Muslim and Jewish Andalusians following the 1492 expulsion. Enríquez de Valderrábano's **Para discantar**, a sixteenth-century duet for two vihuelas (Spanish flat-backed lutes), takes the form of *diferencias* (passagework) over a drone.

Xinjiang (Uyghur China)

For centuries the Xinjiang province in Northwestern China has functioned as a “borderland” between Central and East Asia. For 2500 years various peoples and empires have vied for control of this vast territory, and today it is home to a number of ethnic groups including the Uyghur Muslims.

We've chosen two pieces of Arabic-influenced music which are associated with the Uyghurs. The **Capriccio in Caharga** is a haunting musical exploration based upon the *caharga* scale. **Send me a Rose** is a high-energy Uyghur folk melody which we've arranged with a section in the middle for free improvisation.

North America

We conclude our concert by declaring that the USA and Canada in the modern era can also be called borderlands. After all, North America is where the three of us have met and been influenced by each other's music making, just as been happening for centuries across all parts of the world.

Here each of us offers an original composition: Lucas Harris's **Tastar de corde** (“touching/tasting the strings”) is a semi-improvised prelude in the style of the early Renaissance. Wen Zhao's **Journey Home** depicts a musical journey across the world traveling from East to West, mixing melodic material from both. Ronnie Malley's **Zahma** (“crowded”) was composed in a small fourth-floor Parisian apartment one autumn day while watching from the window as people bustled about like bees.