

# A Journey Between Worlds



Tri Nguyen – Qais Saadi

World Music for Vietnamese Zither, Oud & Percussion



# A Journey Between Worlds

A musical odyssey from the Mekong to the Mediterranean

On my first album, "Consonnances" I attempted to bring together two of the world's great musical traditions: the western string quartet and the Vietnamese zither; two traditions that have spanned the centuries.

For my new recording "A Journey Between Worlds," I am joined by the extraordinary oud player Qaïs Saadi. In doing so, I am bringing together two musical styles that have never met before! Just as in "Consonnances", I have set out to create a new type of music, fusing Vietnamese instruments and melodies and modes with foreign musical styles. I am doing this because of my own bi-cultural upbringing - and because I want people to know about Vietnamese music! Not just as a museum piece or something to be heard at ethnic festivals, but a living music that people can feel, and identify with regardless of frontiers, borders, nationality or race. So what better way to accomplish this than with meeting and performing with musicians from different cultures? I hope my musical journey will encourage others to open their ears and hearts and experience the beauty that is possible when strangers become friends through the sacred act of making music.

All the songs on this EP have been inspired by authentic, traditional Vietnamese music, but have been recomposed, recreated and expanded, while retaining the spirit and structure of the original melodies.

# 1/ Child, where are you?

*Inspired by a short piece of traditional Vietnamese music in the Northern Mode, Southern School.*

*The original melody, Mẫu Tâm Tử, described the story of a mother playing hide and seek with her child. They run around in endless circles exchanging roles - one seeking, the other hiding time and again.*

*After a while, when it is the mother's turn to be the "seeker", she stops and looks to the Sky, and suddenly, she feels wistful and filled with nostalgia for her childhood. Memories flood her mind, loving, but somehow sad. She recalls when she was in her native land – see, she married a man from a foreign country and now lives far from her home. She feels a tear come to her eyes as she drifts back to memories of her own childhood, but then thinks of her beautiful child and how happy she is in her present life (the zither interlude describes this passage).*

*The mother looks at the Sky once again; and realizes it is the same Sky she gazed upon when she was a child ... and she understands that she and her own baby are a perfect circle of a perfect life.*

The propulsive ayyoub khafif rhythms of the derbouka goblet drum set the tone for this playful musical dialogue and create an exotic sense of place. Both the đàn tranh and oud take turns improvising over the Vietnamese melody, each retaining its own distinctive tonal shadings. A lively oud solo, utilizing a combination of the Bayyati 'Ushayran and Hidjaz modes is followed by a non-metrical cadenza on the đàn tranh before leading into a return of the opening material.

## 2/ Prayer for Water

*Inspired by a very intricate piece of Traditional Vietnamese music in the Northern Mode, Southern School.*

*Once upon a time, far away in Vietnam's Central Highlands, a terrible drought befell the land. The villagers knew they needed to help of the Water Dragon to bring the rain and save their harvest. So, they gathered together beating on their leather drums and playing their musical instruments, and played their most beautiful music to summon the Dragon King. When the noble Dragon heard their songs, he flew up into the sky and summoned the clouds to bring rain to the village and save the harvest.*

The original melody for this piece, Lưu Thủy Trường has become one of the most popular đàn tranh pieces and is often the basis for long, improvised solos. The leaping octaves are somewhat unique in Vietnamese music and while reasonably easy to play for the right hand, demand a precise articulation and modulation technique from the left hand, and confer a sense of dignity to villager's songs and supplications to the Dragon King. This is combined with a slow 2/4 version of the Ayyoub rhythm.



### 3/ Golden Skies

*Inspired by a traditional piece in the Northern Mode, Theatrical School.*

*"Complaints to the Sky in the Falling Dust" (known in Vietnamese as Khốc Hoàng Thiên) is a very famous melody that, in certain versions, tells the story of a young girl, who catches a glimpse of a handsome young man at her village's Flower Festival. She is smitten with the boy and offers up her prayers to the evening Sky, hoping she may one day see him again.*

"Khốc Hoàng Thiên" is one of the most beloved traditional Vietnamese melodies. It has appeared in numerous Reformed Operas or Cải Lương, is often performed by traditional musicians and is even a favorite on Karaoke night. So it was an extraordinary experience to hear how this quintessentially Vietnamese tune translated itself into a language suitable to the distinctive tonal qualities of the oud, while retaining all its pentatonic colors. For this piece, the microtonal inflections of the Bayyati 'Ushayran mode were adjusted to fit the pentatonic scale, and add an additional expressive dimension, while the complex interplay of rhythms between the bendir frame drum, đàn tranh and oud transcend any sense of specific geography and takes you on a true Journey Between Worlds.

*When I first recorded "Consonnances", I felt like that young girl, hoping and praying to the Sky that my dreams might come true. In the year since its release, I have met so many wonderful people who have loved and supported me and my music that I know that the Sky has heard my complaints, and has sent me "Golden Skies" for the next stage of my musical journey.*

*Trí Nguyen*



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EP

1. Child Where Are You ? : 6:00
2. Prayer for Water : 1:51
3. Golden Skies : 7:42

[15:33] DDD

Made in France



*For "L", the wind beneath my wings*



LNL 888 1002

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