

CHAN CENTRE
presents



SUN MAR 30 / 7 PM

Silkroad Ensemble:

Uplifted Voices



Canada

Silkroad Ensemble:
Uplifted Voices

This event is programmed by Head Curator Jarrett Martineau

FEATURING ARTISTS

Pura Fé, lap-steel slide guitar, voice

Haruka Fujii, percussion

Maeve Gilchrist, Celtic harp, voice

Karen Ouzounian, cello, voice

Layale Chaker, violin, voice

Mazz Swift, violin, voice

Photography and videography are prohibited.

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The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts is situated within the heart of Musqueam traditional territory

The Chan Centre would like to thank the Chan Endowment Fund and the UBC Faculty of Arts for their continued support.

PROGRAM

Pura Fé

Canoe Song

Haruka Fujii

Tamping Song

Karen Ouzounian

Der Zor

Karen Ouzounian

Imagined Anatolian Dance

Maeve Gilchrist

Farika

Haruka Fujii

Today

Mazz Swift

O Shout

Layale Chaker

Southern Sky

Traditional Armenian, arr. Layale Chaker and Karen Ouzounian

Sareri Hovin Mernem

Pura Fé

Mahk Jchi

Traditional Scottish, arr. Maeve Gilchrist

Fonn Gun Bhi Trom

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

ABOUT SILKROAD

Yo-Yo Ma conceived Silkroad in 1998, recognizing the historical Silk Road as a model for radical cultural collaboration—for the exchange of ideas, tradition, and innovation across borders. In an innovative experiment, he brought together musicians from the lands of the Silk Road to co-create a musical language founded in difference, thus creating the foundation of Silkroad: both a touring ensemble comprised of world-class musicians from all over the globe and a social-impact organization working to make a positive impact across borders through the arts. Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Rhiannon Giddens, Silkroad leads social impact initiatives and educational programming alongside the creation of new music by the Grammy Award-winning Silkroad Ensemble. For more information, please visit Silkroad.org.

About the Program

Uplifted Voices brings together a stellar lineup of performer-composers from the Silkroad Ensemble in a series of pieces that highlight each artist's musical storytelling. These compositions, often inspired by their homeland, ancestors, community, and family, represent previously under-recognized voices from around the world, offering a fresh perspective on the history and migration of music.

This unique program showcases a synthesis of global musical traditions and contemporary innovation, with each artist contributing their unique voice to craft a shared musical experience. From the Tuscarora Nation in North Carolina, singer-songwriter and activist Pura Fé blends traditional Native American sounds with contemporary Americana, honoring her indigenous heritage while celebrating its enduring relevance. Japanese multi-percussionist Haruka Fujii has gained international acclaim as a prominent solo percussionist and marimbist, known for her interpretations of contemporary music and premieres of works by leading composers. Scottish harpist and composer Maeve Gilchrist intertwines jazz and folk while staying true to her Celtic roots, expanding the role of the harp into new, unexplored territories. Armenian cellist and composer Karen Ouzounian centers her artistic practice in her love of the collaborative process and the development of adventurous new works. Lebanese violinist and composer Layale Chaker merges the intricate sounds of Arabic Maqam with jazz and contemporary classical elements, inviting listeners on a journey into new soundscapes. Mazz Swift, a violinist and composer, brings a deeply innovative approach, fusing classic African American music, electronica, and mindfulness, with improvisation as a central theme across genres.

Canoe Song

Pura Fé

Gawinu is Canoe song. I created it to honor my NC Coastal Tuscarora Ancestors that lived on the Neuse River/Pamlico Sound...it went out into the Atlantic Oceans... Our Ancestral Waterways were our highways that connected us all... they were also our Indigenous family trees our mother earth bloodlines and Tribal territories...that ran up and down as opposed to the colonial state and county lines and rail road tracks that cut across severing the umbilical, natural flow of the land scape. I sing these songs to reclaim the old Ancestral Waterways... that will always be here.

Tamping Song

Haruka Fujii

While doing research for Silkroad's acclaimed American Railroad program, I was surprised to discover that after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigrants became one of the dominant workforces; by 1906, over 13,000 Japanese immigrants were working for the railroads. Later, under pressure, Japan would stop labor immigration to the United States via the Gentleman's Agreement of 1908.

During this research I also discovered a recording of the "Tamping Song" — a railroad worker's song released on Columbia Records Japan in 1963. Using an inspirational melody from this song, my work weaves the ambition, dreams, and hopes of the immigrant workers on the front lines of the railroad construction in the US with the sentiment for their homeland.

Der Zor

Karen Ouzounian

Oh, Armenian - dying for your religion's sake. This is the recurring line in the song "Der Zor Chollerende", a song sung in Turkish by the victims of the Armenian Genocide while on the forced marches into the Syrian desert of Der Zor. In 1915 and 1916, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were marched to their deaths in Der Zor by the Ottoman Turkish government. I discovered the song a few years ago in the Library of Congress's catalogue of recordings of Armenian folk musicians in Fresno, California. A lone, male voice in 1939. The recording is grainy and a dog barks in the distance. Thirty years ago, I first heard about Der Zor when I was a child in Armenian elementary school in Canada. There the children heard that the desert was filled with our ancestors' bones.

Today I am haunted by this song, and I visit Der Zor in my imagination. I wanted this piece to mirror my discovery of this music and it begins distantly, as an old recording. An unexpected vocal chord brings us into the present, and melodies are passed around and elaborated on by the musicians: the contemporary world remembering, teaching and sharing the stories of the past.

The song is sung in Turkish—the principal language of my grandparents and previous generations but a language I do not speak myself. After being driven from their homes, families like mine moved to Syria and Lebanon, and then further on to France, Canada and the U.S. Armenian became our home language. There is an irony that the act of trying to eliminate the Armenian people led to a newfound sense of strength and cultural unity around the world, with Armenians across the diaspora from Iran to California sharing culture, history, and songs like this one.

Imagined Anatolian Dance

Karen Ouzounian

"Imagined Anatolian Dance" is a reimagining and adaption of music from Dear Mountains, a work I co-composed with Lembit Beecher in 2024 for chorus, cello, oud and percussion. My grandparents and great-grandparents were born in the Anatolian cities of Gesaria, Akshehir (Konya), Marash, and Sepastia, in what is now Turkey, in Armenian communities that lived side-by-side with Turks, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Arabs and others in the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. They were among those Armenians who survived the 1.5 million killed during the Armenian

Genocide, which reached its apex from 1915-1917. As part of Dear Mountains, I wrote imagined versions of Anatolian dances that channel an Anatolian Armenian culture that was systematically erased and no longer exists in its indigenous land, yet continues to live and evolve around the world. This music takes traditional rhythmic and melodic modes as a starting point for contemporary inventions, and draws inspiration in particular from the Kef music tradition that flowered in the Armenian-American community following the genocide, music of merriment and joy as a response to overwhelming sorrow and trauma. The 10/8 Curcuna rhythmic mode was particularly popular in this musical community, many of whom came from Diyarbekir/Dikranagerd, and in this arrangement for Silkroad, a simmering 10/8 breaks open into a joyous and defiant dance in 6/8 inspired by the Anatolian mountains of my ancestors.

Farika

Maeve Gilchrist

Farika is a meditation in compound time. Rooted in the 'jig time' of Maeve's native Scotland and evolved into a circular groove inspired by the intersections of Celtic Dance music and the hypnotic Kora grooves of West Africa. This is an open-form composition that leaves a lot of room for improvisation and jamming!

Today

Haruka Fujii

"Today" was originally composed in the spring of 2024 as part of a suite, Songs for Ishikawa – a collection of songs created to uplift the people and land of Ishikawa. The region was severely impacted by a massive earthquake on New Year's Day of 2024, which caused significant damage across the beautiful peninsula and took the lives of hundreds of people. The composition process also coincided with the escalation of the devastating news from the Gaza-Israel conflict, and with Haruka's father, Akira Fujii, battling aggressive cancer. "Today" was written as an anthem of encouragement, dedicated to all those on Earth who face life and death, bravely living each day, and to those who support them.

O Shout

Mazz Swift

O shout, O shout!

O shout away, and don't you mind And glory, glory, glory's in my soul

Music is a well known way with which enslaved people of the United States were able to communicate complex messages. Messages of hope, devotion, freedom and insurrection; hidden in plain sight.

Oh satan told me not to pray (Speaking of the white oppressors was coded, out of necessity.)

He wan' my soul at judgment day

But Glory, glory, glory's in my soul (The love in this heart makes this soul too great to be owned or defeated.)

And everywhere I went to pray

There something was in my way (It is a much documented fact that enslaved people were punished severely, to the loss of limb and/or life itself for reading, writing or for practicing their own religion/s.)

Old foreman just like satan say (A newly added verse to further illustrate the correlation between evil and the oppressor's ways.)

Get back to work, ain't came to play (America's moralizing of work, and devaluing of rest has its roots in slavery, as most of our "values" do. I encourage us all to question everything.)

But glory, glory, Glory's in my soul! (All this and we still recognize the divine in all of us. That's the part that prevails. That's the part that redeems.)

Southern Sky

Layale Chaker

"Southern Sky" is inspired by childhood memories of visiting our family home in southern Lebanon, a place perched at the very edge of a borderland. By day, I would see the boundary—a line so close, yet impossibly out of reach—its presence undeniable, its crossing unthinkable. But at night fall, the world would shift. The skies there were the clearest I had ever known, and the stars burned bright, breathtaking, scattered across an expanse so luminous that the night itself felt boundless. In that vast, shimmering expanse, the notion of borders dissolved. The sky and the land suddenly stretched endlessly, limitless and free, as if the universe itself had opened its arms—only immensity remained.

Sareri Hovin Mernem

Armenian traditional, arr. Layale Chaker and Karen Ouzounian

Sareri Hovin Mernem

(Lyrics by V. Harootiunian)

Melody by H. Badalian)

Sareri hovin mernem,
hovin mernem, hovin mernem
Im yari boyin mernem,
boyin mernem, boyin mernem
Mi dari e chem desel,
desnoghi jookhd achkin mernem
Gaynel em kal chem garogh,
kal chem garogh, kal chem garogh,
Lutsvel em lal chem garogh,
lal chem garogh, lal chem garogh,
Mi dari e chem desel,
desnoghin jookhd achkin mernem.
Yarus mishd surdis mech e,
payts anoonu dal chem garogh
Kederu choor chen beroom,
choor chen beroom, choor chen
beroom,
Im yarits loor chen beroom, loor chen
beroom, loor chen beroom,
Chulni sirdu sarel e?
El indz siro hoor chen beroom

I'd Die for the Mountain Wind

(Lyrics by V. Harootiunian)

Melody by H. Badalian)

I would die for the wind of the
mountains,
the wind of the mountains
I would die for my love's tall stature,
tall stature
I have not seen him in a year. I would
die for
the pair of eyes that saw him last
I'm standing, yet standing still
I cannot move forward,
I'm filled with sorrow, yet so full that
I cannot cry,
I have not seen him in a year,
I would die for the eyes that saw him
last.
My love is always in my heart,
but I cannot utter his name
The rivers no longer bring water,
no longer bring water
They no longer bring news from my
love,
no longer bring news
Is it that his heart has frozen?
They no longer bring me the fire of
love

Mahk Jchi

Pura Fé

Mahk Jchi... I wrote for Ulali to sing for Robbie Robertson's Red Road Ensemble album in 1995. The word Mahk Jchi means Our Hearts in the Tutelo/Occaneechi/Saponi dialect of eastern NC/VA states. The words translated by Lawrence Dunmore say... Our Hearts are full, our minds are good, our Ancestors come and give us strength. They say never forget who you are or where you come from. But this version of Mahk Jchi I connect with a song I wrote when I was 16 years old called "Roots". These two songs are similar in melody and fit together. I wrote Roots after learning about the devastation that the Uranium strip mining in Navajo

Dene land four corners... Canyons area has done. In these transitional times and great violence on people and earth...we pray that humanity can sway the Authorities that be to move to a better, more sustainable way of life...

Fonn Gun Bhi Trom

Trad Scottish, arr. Maeve Gilchrist

This suite of tunes pairs a reimagining of the Gaelic Walking song "Fonn Gun Bhi Trom" (I am disposed to mirth) with playful lyrics from an Irish children's song to create a chant-like effect. It morphs into Maeve's composition "Ancestral Mud" where the cello, violins, marimba and harp toss around melody fragments as if playing ball. At heart, a deconstructed 'reel', the constantly morphing time signatures create an urgency that, in keeping with the linear tradition, moves the musicians and the audience forward to a climactic ending.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Pura Fé

Lap-steel Slide Guitar, Voice

Pura Fé (Tuscarora/Taino) is an Indigenous activist, singer-songwriter and storyteller known for her distinct, soulful vocals and for breathing life into several musical genres. Her work as a musician has brought her around the world for work at festivals, benefits in classrooms, online and in the studio. As a Native activist and cultural leader, she has done work to combat the erasure of Native culture, restore traditions, build community, fight corporate takeover of Native land and give a voice to those facing social injustice. As the founding member of the internationally renowned Native Women's a cappella trio Ulali, Pura Fé helped to create a movement throughout Indian Country, which not only empowered Native Women's hand drum and harmony, but also built a bridge for Native music into the mainstream music scene. Pura Fé's solo career has produced six studio albums with her Native blues and lap- steel slide guitar work. While touring Europe with Music Maker Blues Review under Dixie Frog and Nueva Onda French labels, she won the Grand Prix du Disque from L'Académie Charls Cros (French GRAMMY) for Best World Album in 2006 for *Tuscarora Nation Blues*, and a Native American Music Award (NAMMY) for Best Female Artist for *Follow Your Heart's Desire* in the same year. Pura Fé and Ulali appeared in and consulted for the Rezolution Pictures Documentary *RUMBLE: The Indians That Rocked the World*, which won first place at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Pura Fé commented on her experience with the documentary, "This gave me a chance to reenact a piece of the historical birth of blues music that no one considers or hears about." As United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo once said, "We are systematically being written out of everything." To have a platform to help bring awareness to the mainstream was crucial to Pura Fé and Ulali. Today, Pura Fé lives in Canada and is writing a film for Rezolution Pictures. She also works with First Nations dance and theater troops while recording a new album.'

Haruka Fujii

Percussion

Haruka Fujii, Associate Artistic Director of the Silkroad Ensemble and a multi-percussionist, has won international acclaim for her interpretations of contemporary music. She has commissioned and premiered numerous works by luminary living composers. Ms. Fujii has appeared as a soloist with major orchestras, including the San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon and the NHK Symphony Orchestra. She also performs as a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the New York-based Line C3 Percussion Group and the Utari Percussion Duo, a collaboration with her sister, Rika Fujii. Her recordings are available on the SONY, Kosei, ALM Records and Deutsche Grammophon labels. In addition to her performance career, Ms. Fujii is on the percussion faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and frequently serves as a guest instructor at the Juilliard Summer Percussion Seminar and several international percussion festivals. She is also the founder and Creative Director of the newly formed non-profit performing arts organization Nippon Kobo, based in the Bay Area.

Maeve Gilchrist

Celtic Harp, Voice

Edinburgh-born harpist and composer Maeve Gilchrist has been credited as an innovator on her native instrument and has taken the Celtic (lever) Harp to new levels of performance and visibility. Currently based in Kingston, NY, Maeve tours internationally as a solo artist and composer as well as being a member of the GRAMMY-nominated Silkroad Ensemble, Arooj Aftab's GRAMMY-winning Vulture Prince Ensemble and as part of the multi-disciplinary quartet Edges of Light. She has performed and recorded with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Frankie Gavin, Esperanza Spalding, Bruce Molsky, Ambrose Akinmusire and Solas. As a composer, Maeve straddles the worlds of folk and classical with pieces including her original concerto for symphony orchestra and harp (a co-commission with Luke Benton), a three-movement Samuel Beckett-inspired piece for harp, string quartet and sound samples which was premiered at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival in the spring of 2018 and a number of other pieces for harp ensembles and strings. She is a regular visiting artist at the Berklee College of Music and has had a number of instructional books published by Hal Leonard and 80 Days Publishing. Maeve has released a number of albums to her name on the Adventure Music Record Label as well as being a featured soloist on the Dreamworks blockbuster

movie soundtrack, *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. Her most recent album, *The Harpweaver*, has garnered international acclaim including a five-star review from the *Irish Times* who described it as “buoyant, sprightly and utterly beguiling...a snapshot of a musician at the top of her game.” Maeve is the co-music director of the WGBH holiday show *A Christmas Celtic Sojourn* and the co-artistic director of the brand-new Rockport Celtic Music festival, an innovative new festival focused on cross-curation and the outer-fringes of Celtic Music.

Layale Chaker

Violin, Voice

Raised on the verge of several musical streams since her childhood, Lebanese violinist and composer Layale Chaker debuted her musical training at the National Higher Conservatory of Beirut in her native Lebanon. She later pursued her musical studies at Conservatoire de Paris and the Royal Academy of Music in London and is currently working towards her doctoral degree at Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris. She has studied under professors such as Mohamed Hashem, Carmen Scipicariu, Jeanne-Marie Conquer and Nicholas Miller. Layale has appeared as a soloist, performer, improviser and composer in concerts, recitals, and projects around Europe, the Middle-East, North and South America and Asia, with collaborations and commissions with Oxford Orchestra, West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Holland Baroque, Babylon Orchestra, Avignon Festival, Lucerne Festival, National Sawdust, London Jazz Festival, Wigmore Hall and New World Symphony, among others. She is also the founder and leader of Sarafand, with whom she has released the album *Inner Rhyme* that received features in *The New York Times*, *The Strad*, and *Songlines Top of the World* in March 2019 with a 5-star review, and NPR’s #2 of 10 Best Releases of January 2019. Layale is a Ruth Anderson 2017 Competition Prize winner, the recipient of the Royal Academy of Music’s 2018 Guinness Award and the Nadia and Lili Boulanger 2019 Scheme, and a finalist of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé 2018 Prize.

Mazz Swift

Violin, Voice

Critically acclaimed as one of America's most talented and versatile performers today, violin/vox/freestyle composition artist Mazz Swift has engaged audiences all over the world with the signature weaving of song, melody and improvisation that they call "MazzMuse." As a singer, composer and Juilliard-trained violinist who plays electronic and acoustic instruments, Mazz has performed and recorded with a diverse accumulation of artists including the Silkroad Ensemble, William Parker, Butch Morris, Jason Lindner, James "Blood" Ulmer, Vernon Reid, Valerie June, Whitney Houston, DJ Logic, Kanye West and D'Angelo. Mx. Swift is a 2021 United States Artist and 2019 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, currently working on a series of compositions that involve conducted improvisation, centered around protest, spirituals and the Ghanaian concept of "Sankofa": looking back to learn how to move forward.

Karen Ouzounian

Cello, Voice

Sought after for her "radiant" (*New York Times*) performances full of "tremendous heart, bringing joy and a captivating sound to the stage" (*The Strad*), Karen Ouzounian is an acclaimed cellist and composer who creates music from a deeply personal place. She has appeared as a soloist in venues including the Konzerthaus Berlin, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Kölner Philharmonie, Tonhalle Düsseldorf and Carnegie Hall, championing a remarkable breadth of music with fierce commitment and emotional power. An omnivorous musical spirit who "powerfully shatters pigeonholes with her artistic partners" (*Ravinia Magazine*), she has premiered numerous works and collaborated with some of the most singular musicians of our time, including Rhiannon Giddens, Augustin Hadelich and Kayhan Kalhor. She is a member of the Silkroad Ensemble, has appeared at the Marlboro, Ojai, Caramoor and Ravinia festivals, and was the founding cellist of the Aizuri Quartet for eleven years, earning a GRAMMY nomination, major chamber music prizes on three continents, and serving as the MetLiveArts String Quartet-in-Residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

At the heart of Karen's artistic practice is her love of collaboration and the development of adventurous programs. She gave the world premiere of Anna Clyne's *Shorthand* for solo cello and strings with The Knights, which she recorded for Avie Records and toured as soloist with The Knights throughout Germany, Denmark and the U.S. to critical acclaim.

Her current focus includes a trio of projects created with composer and animator Lembit Beecher: *Mayrig* ("mother" in Armenian), an intimate 60-minute show for cello with electronics, piano and vocals; *Dear Mountains*, a 42-minute work co-composed with Beecher for chorus, solo cello, oud, and percussion commissioned by Cantori New York and premiered in 2024; and *Tell Me Again*, a concerto for cello and orchestra which received its world premiere with conductor Eric Jacobsen and the Orlando Philharmonic, and its West Coast premiere with conductor Cristian Măcelaru and the 2024 Cabrillo Festival Orchestra. Karen holds Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees from Juilliard, where she was a student of Timothy Eddy, a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music, and is a recipient of the S&R Foundation's Washington Award. Born to Lebanese-Armenian parents in Toronto, she resides in New York City with her husband, Lembit Beecher. For more information visit www.karenouzounian.com.