

# Nancy Guy Named Inaugural Chiu-Shan and Rufina Chen Chancellor's Endowed Chair in Taiwan Studies



*Professor Nancy Guy's ultimate career goal is to inspire more people to learn about Taiwan and the many facets of its culture and history. Photo by Erik Jepsen/University Communications.*

## Story by:

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**N**ancy Guy, an ethnomusicologist and professor of music at UC San Diego, has dedicated her career to studying the music of Taiwan. From the way environmental concerns seep into songs to

how politics proliferate opera, Guy is passionate about discovering and sharing the diverse ways music shapes culture and society in Taiwan. Now, Guy has been appointed the inaugural holder of the Chiu-Shan and Rufina Chen Chancellor's Endowed Chair in Taiwan Studies in the School of Arts and Humanities in support of her research and teaching activities.

The \$1.5 million endowed faculty chair was established with a \$1 million gift from Chiu-Shan Chen and Rufina C. Chen, which was matched with \$500,000 through the Chancellor's Endowed Chair Challenge. The endowed chair will provide a dedicated source of funds, in perpetuity, for the chair holder's scholarly activities as well as support for faculty salaries and graduate fellowships.

"We are deeply grateful to Chiu-Shan and Rufina Chen for their extraordinary generosity," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "This gift empowers our distinguished faculty members, such as Nancy Guy, to forge meaningful global connections and push the boundaries of interdisciplinary



*Professor of Music Nancy Guy*

research, illuminating the complexities and richness of the human experience. Their support, which also includes a recent gift to establish the Center for Taiwan Studies, allows UC San Diego to further solidify its position as a leading authority on Asian studies, fostering a deeper understanding of our increasingly connected world."

Chiu-Shan Chen came to the United States in 1962 to pursue a master's degree at the University of Nevada, Reno. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering at UC San Diego in 1969, which was followed by a postdoctoral position in Manchester, England. An established physicist and entrepreneur, Chen co-founded San Diego-based companies Pacific Biotech, Inc. and Wyntek Diagnostics, Inc. He is also a founding and active member of the Taiwanese American Foundation of San Diego.

In 2021, Chiu-Shan and Rufina donated \$5 million to support the establishment of the [Center for Taiwan Studies](#) based in the School of Arts and Humanities, which Guy currently co-directs. The center aims to connect local and international communities through diverse events and programming expanding the cultural understanding of Taiwan and Taiwanese Americans.

"Endowed chairs are one of the most significant ways we can affirm the incredible research and teaching our faculty are leading," said Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities Cristina Della Coletta. "As co-director of our Center for Taiwan Studies and someone who has committed their career to studying this dynamic region, Nancy Guy is poised to reshape the narrative of Taiwan in positive ways. We thank the Chens for creating a lasting legacy that will benefit our faculty for years to come."

For Guy, the support means the chance to embark on an ambitious international project she's been envisioning for years. "I am thrilled and honored to be the inaugural chairholder, and I thank Chiu-Shan and Rufina for their generosity," she said. "I'm also very grateful for their decision to direct these funds toward Taiwan studies at large, not just music. I want my work to reach far beyond music study. My ultimate career goal is to inspire more people to learn about Taiwan and the many facets of its culture and history."

## **Deciphering the musical imprints of Taiwan**



Why is music important? How does music influence culture? These are just two of the big questions that occupy Guy in her research. Her love affair with Taiwan was first sparked in 1982 when she spent a year studying at the National Taiwan University Mandarin Training Center through a grant from Taiwan's Ministry of Education.

As a French horn performance major, she joined the university's orchestra and met her lifelong mentor, conductor Lee Shut-teh. "She took me under her wing and shared Taiwanese history that was not often discussed," said Guy. "She was central to my becoming a Taiwan music specialist and inspired me to dedicate my work to understanding this place and telling its story."

Guy, who joined the Department of Music in 1998, has immersed herself in the music, history, culture and politics of Taiwan for four decades. She has numerous projects underway, including an investigation of how environmental concerns are expressed through music, as well as the ways songs have shaped key systems. This subject matter is part of a growing field known as "ecomusicology."



*National Taichung Theater in Taiwan*

Her current work involves research on the climate impacts and social behaviors behind innovative "singing" garbage trucks.

"Taiwan has an interesting approach to taking care of household wastes," explained Guy. "The garbage truck plays music and people bring out their pre-sorted waste to put in the correct receptacles. Residents are better educated about recycling, and Taiwan has developed one of the best rates for reducing household waste in the world. Music is a key part of this system."

Guy's scholarly pursuits are wide-ranging. With support from the new endowed chair, she will begin a project she has been dreaming about for years—an international collaboration that will delve into the events that transformed Taiwan into a thriving place starting in the 1990s. "I plan to invite political scientists, historians, sociologists, and scholars of performing arts to join together in person to look at this period and analyze what happened," said Guy. "I listen to music from this time and can hear it changing; there's a kind of hope and creativity that we really don't notice before this decade."

The thrill of living in and studying Taiwan has only strengthened over time for Guy, whose enthusiasm has multiplied since being named inaugural chairholder. "Taiwan is endlessly interesting; I could live 10 lifetimes and not be done," she said.

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