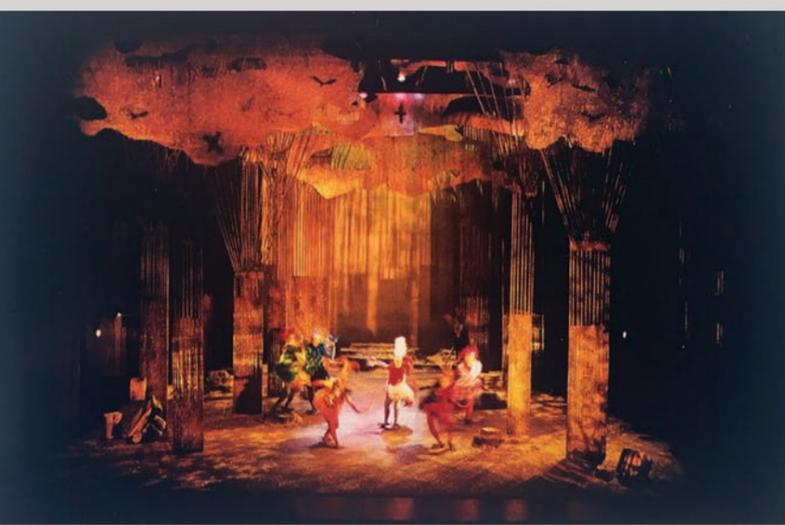
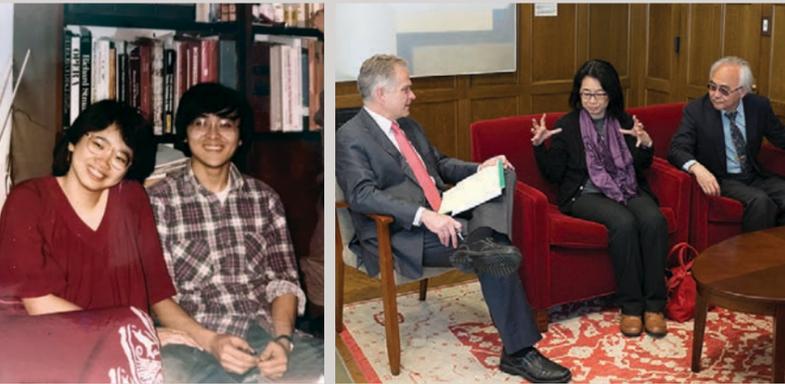


Two Generations of IU Artists in Taiwan



Top left: Recently married IU students Pei-Chun Che (left) and Chyi-Wen Yang entertained nearly all new Taiwanese students in their East University apartment during the 1980s.

Top right: Pei-Chun Che (center) and Chyi-Wen Yang (right) talk with Shawn Reynolds, IU associate vice president for international partnerships, during a visit with IU President Michael McRobbie in Bloomington.

Bottom: Chyi-Wen Yang transformed his training in architecture to expertise in stage design. Here is his set design for a production of Aristophanes's *The Birds* at the Taipei National University of the Arts in 2001.

How many lives has the Eigenmann Hall cafeteria changed? The data sets that the university collects don't speak to this important element, but alumni do. One such instance began in Taiwan. As a boy, Chyi-Wen Yang (楊其文) was always interested in arts in different forms, such as music, theater, and fine arts. But in Taiwan during that time it was difficult to persuade parents to let their children pursue a career in the arts. Yang found the best compromise he could between his own interests and the concerns of his parents. He came to the United States to pursue a bachelor's degree in architecture from Ball State University.

After successfully completing his master's degree in art at Ball State, he looked around for a program leading to a terminal degree. Having honored his parents' concerns, he thought it was time to pursue his own interests. He visited Bloomington, talked with Wesley Peters, a faculty member in the Department of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance, and set his sights on IU's master of fine arts in scenic design. "It was the closest thing in art to my background in architecture," he said. He moved to Bloomington and settled in a room at Ashton Residence Center in the summer of 1983.

Meanwhile, back in Taipei, Pei-Chun Che (車蓓群) was completing her bachelor's degree in English and applied linguistics

at the National Chengchi University. "I always wanted to be a teacher, but a bachelor's degree was not enough. I went to my linguistics professor for advice. He recommended three universities. 'Any of the three would be good, if you were good enough,' he said. Eventually I chose IU because I wanted to experience a very different culture from what I had known in Taipei." She came in the summer of 1983 to a room in Eigenmann Hall.

"It was a very hot summer in Bloomington that year," Yang related. "Ashton wasn't air conditioned and the local stores were sold out of fans. I couldn't stand it so I moved across the street to Eigenmann, which was air conditioned." At dinner that night in the cafeteria of Eigenmann Hall, 7,640 miles from their mutual hometown, he met Pei-Chun. Less than six months later, they were married at the Monroe County Courthouse. "It was January 13 and a Friday; we chose that day because nobody else wanted to get married on Friday the 13th."

The couple moved to married student housing on Third Street. Yang became head of the Taiwanese Student Association. "For two years," Che reported, "we arranged airport pickup, and almost every Taiwanese student who studied at IU spent their first night or had their first meal at our place."

When Che finished her master's in applied linguistics and Yang his M.F.A. in stage design, they moved back to Taipei. Che took up a teaching position at the well-established National Chengchi University and taught there for 31 years. Yang returned to take up a position at the Taipei National University of the Arts. "My original intent was to teach architecture. By the time I returned, there were many teaching architecture, but no one teaching stage design." Che quickly added, "He was the very first person in my country who completed an M.F.A. in design. He had a job offer before he finished his degree." The University of the Arts was not even five years old when Yang returned. "He has grown up with the university for 32 years," Che said. He taught, designed stage sets, and painted scenery. Besides scenic artist and professor, he held a variety of administrative positions, dean of general affairs, director of performing arts, dean of research and development, and dean of his college. He even worked for a while as director of the computing center.

In summer 2017, Yang completed a four-year term as president of what has become the leading arts university in Taiwan, with programs ranging from music, theater, and fine arts to media, film, and animation.

But that is not the end of the Hoosier connection. When Yang came back to Indiana as a visiting scholar at Ball State, he offered to bring one of his sons with him. His son, Yuen-Suo, initially did not want to leave his friends, but he changed his mind and offered to accompany his father to the United States after the winter break. But when the boy explained what he wanted to do in the United States—to study music and clarinet performance—the parents relived a family drama from a generation earlier.

"No, no, no, no," they said. "Nowadays, nobody finds a job working with your fingers." Che was first to relent. "We set barriers," she said. "I told my son if you do well in a national contest, I will support you. He got champion in clarinet." Yang took Yuen-Suo to audition for the five top programs for high school students in the United States. The boy was accepted at all of them and chose IU. "The choice was not based on our own connection with IU," Yang explained. "One reason was Professor Harold Klug. I never saw a professor so good at explaining how a clarinetist drives his body and controls the air to play his instrument."

Equally important to the cautious parents was the nature of the institution. They wanted their son to receive a comprehensive education. "Instead of only being a musician, he would also know

the world. We told him that if he regretted choosing music, he could switch to another major at IU."

Another unexpected benefit resulted from a chance meeting in Indianapolis. Father and son were at a restaurant when Yang overheard a group at another table talking about the support they received in Bloomington. "I heard them talking about IU and mentoring. When I approached them, they said 'Ah, you are the one!' They had come to Bloomington when Yang was head of the Taiwanese Student Association. They filled us in on who was still in Bloomington and they took good care of my son during his stay."

Yuen-Suo Yang came to the United States as a high school junior, earned his diploma from Bloomington High School South, and completed six years of study at the IU Jacobs School of Music, winning the Indiana Woodwind Concerto Competition along the way. He moved on to the University of Texas at Austin for his master's, won more competitions, and now performs with Shen Yun Performing Arts, a musical organization that travels the world with a mission to revive the lost world of traditional Chinese culture and share it with everyone. Like his father, he is demonstrating that a career in the arts is both possible and rewarding. ■

Top: Yuen-Suo Yang with IU Jacobs School of Music Professor Howard Klug after a performance in 2012

Bottom: The Yang family on a visit to IU in 2008 with Chyi-Yen Yang's former advisor Wesley Peters, associate professor emeritus of theatre, drama, and contemporary dance

