

William Hall, D.M.A, Dean and Artistic Director  
Richard T. Bryant, Executive Director

VASCAM

presents

# On Life.

## A Narrative Concert



Sunday, March 26, 2017 | 4:00pm

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Music by Cung Tiến, Tôn Thất Tiết  
And scenes from *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính*  
by P.Q. Phan

Dear friends and patrons,

On behalf of the Vietnamese American Society for Creative Arts and Music (VASCAM), I am honored to present to you ON LIFE.

This concert of cultivated music composed by Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese Overseas since 1980 opens up a series of future concerts that aim to cultivate, nurture, and promote works by Vietnamese American composers—in a hope that VASCAM can include a new composer every year.

This concert also serves other purposes which are to further enrich the musical cultural life of the Vietnamese American community of the SoCal area and to bridge the cultural musical activities among communities in the area. Through old and new stories, the contemporary musical language in this concert expresses who we are and where we belong.

We thank you for your support and for taking your precious time to attend this event.

Sincerely yours,

PQ Phan, DMA, FAAR '89  
VASCAM, President



**VIETNAMESE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR  
CREATIVE ARTS AND MUSIC**

[www.vascam.org](http://www.vascam.org)

create / inspire / connect

A non-profit organization to cultivate, nurture and promote creative arts and music by Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese Overseas. With time, VASCAM wishes to include those interested in Vietnamese culture.

Dear friends and music lovers,

*The Viễn Đông Daily News* is very proud to underwrite the rental cost of the concert date of this extraordinary ON LIFE event.

At *The Viễn Đông Daily News*, we believe that a creative and inspiring cultivated musical art like this event deserves a “stage” to express, to inspire, and to share with our community. Like what our paper has done, this concert also aims to reach out and to serve the community, and to enrich our lives. I was touched to learn that this concert narrates a part of our lives, celebrates who we have been, and further cultivates the best of our potential.

I sincerely hope that you will thoroughly enjoy the concert which I already knew I would.

Sincerely yours,

Nhuận Nguyễn

Publisher/Editor, *The Viễn Đông Daily News*

**Serving the community for 20 years**

**Viễn Đông**  
DAILY NEWS

# Program

P.Q. Phan  
(b. 1962)

*Bass drum Overture* (2017)

P.Q. Phan

*Narrative Prologue* (2017)

Bích Vân, Teresa Mai – *Narrators*

P.Q. Phan

from *Songs of Solitude* (2007)

from *Song of Myself* (Whitman)

Brian Arreola, *Tenor*

*Isolation* (Symons)

Teresa Mai, *Soprano*

Projected art works by Trinh Mai

*My Way* (Beckett)

Brian Arreola, *Tenor*

Bích Vân, Teresa Mai, *Soprano*

Ngàn Khôi Chorus

VASCAM Ensemble

Cơ Nguyễn, *Conductor*

Cung Tiến  
(b. 1938)

*The Freedom Song* (1984)

Teresa Mai, *Soprano*

Hoàng Nguyễn, *Piano*

Tôn Thất Tiết  
(b. 1933)

*Trung Dzuong* (1980)

Hoàng Nguyễn, *Piano*

Projected art works by Ann Phong

Cung Tiến

*Spring Reverberations* (1981)

Teresa Mai, *Soprano*

Hoàng Nguyễn, *Piano*

P.Q. Phan

*Cò Lả – Violin Concertino\** (2016)

Thi Nguyễn, *Solo Violin*

Bích Vân, *Soprano*

VASCAM Ensemble

Cơ Nguyễn, *Conductor*

\*World premiere

**P.Q. Phan**

intermission

Extracts from *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính* (2011)

*Overture*

*The Wedding* – Act I, Scene 1

*The Fatal Night* – Act I, Scene 2

*Spring Festival at the Temple* – Act I, Scene 4

*Thị Mầu's Affaire with her Servant Nô* – Act I, Scene 5

*Taking You to the Market Place* – Act II, Scene 9

*The Ascension* – ACT II, Scene 10

Additional images for the program are contributed by:

Anvi Hoàng, Todd Yampol, Hà Quang Hiếu,  
Dzung Nguyễn, Đình Thao.

*Cast*

(in order of appearance)

**Brian Arreola:** Thiện Sĩ, Nô, Sư Cụ

**Veronica Jensen:** Thị Kính

**Bích Vân:** Sùng Bà, Thị Mầu's friend

**Angela Yoon:** Thị Mầu

**Teresa Mai:** Thị Mầu's friend

Ngân Khôi Chorus

VASCAM Orchestra

Cơ Nguyễn, *Conductor*

Hoàng Nguyễn, *Piano Accompanist*

P.Q. Phan, *Stage Director, Costumes*

Tú Trinh, *Make-up Specialist*



# Program Notes

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By P.Q. Phan

from *Songs of Solitude: From Song of Myself, Isolation, and My Way*

Solitude is an essential state that everyone experiences during their lifetime regardless of age, gender, culture, ethnicity, or time. *Songs of Solitude* reflect a sense of absence and longing, anguish in isolation, expression of loneliness and despair, at the same time they reflect hope, exuberance of freedom, and celebration of Self.

*The Freedom Song and Spring Reverberations*

*The Freedom Song* (1984) and *Spring Reverberations* (1981) by Cung Tién are different than most of his old-time favorites that Vietnamese people are familiar with. Their sentiments are more contemporary and in tune with his new living environment in the United States. These songs are much less romantic and rather sentimental with a touch of being realistic. They are reminiscent of memories of the past from his homeland Vietnam. Cung Tién has re-invented himself through these songs.

*Trung Dzuong*

*Trung Dzuong* for solo piano was written in 1981 to dedicate to the Vietnamese boat people, Tôn Thất Tiết said. In a way *Trung Dzuong* expresses not only despair and horror, but also hope and bravery.

*Cò Lả – Violin Concertino*

*Cò Lả (Swirling Crane) – Violin Concertino* is a showcase work for the violin. It was written for and dedicated to Thi Nguyễn. It adapts from the well-known Quan Họ tune of the same title. The work is constructed in a cyclic form with a quasi concerto grosso framework.

Arias from *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính*

*The Tale of Lady Thị Kính* is a story about the transcendental journey of a young fair lady to her Buddhahood. It is a universal statement about the beauty of love, compassion and selflessness.

*The Tale of Lady Thị Kính* is an evolutionary version of Hát Chèo's most famous repertoire *Quan Âm Thị Kính* which is believed to be created around the 10th century in Vietnam. I found the story strikingly similar to the life of Phạm Thị Ngà, mother of Lý Công Uẩn whose King's name is Lý Thái Tổ and who founded the Thăng Long era (late 10th century). The script of *Quan Âm Thị Kính* has developed, details were added and subtracted throughout its history to make it suitable for different performance purposes and occasions. Following this tradition, after researching, collecting, and combining various sources in both written and oral formats, I reconstructed the *Quan Âm Thị Kính* script and gave it a new title, *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính*, which is more adoptable into a Euro-centric Grand Opera work.

Composed between 2009-11, *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính* is scored for double winds orchestra, large chorus, and a cast of 14 roles. *The Tale of Lady Thị Kính* is dedicated to my lovely and supportive wife Anvi Hoàng, who has worked tirelessly to promote the work, and had listened in everyday at 3 or 4 AM during the time the work was composed.

For the extracted scenes and arias from the opera presented in this ON LIFE concert, their instrumentation is reduced to a chamber group of flute, clarinet, one percussion player, harp, and string quartet. While this chamber ensemble still reflects the core integrity of the original version, some metaphoric and iconic musical elements are missing. While the role of Sư Cự has been transposed for practical and economic purposes, the vocal parts of Thiện Sĩ, Thị Kính, Thị Mầu, Thị Mầu friends, Nô, and Tiểu Kính Tâm are in their original versions.