



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

University of North Texas College of Music

Guest Artist Recital | Thursday, September 15, 2022 | 5:00 pm | Voertman Hall

Marjing Mayanglambam, voice and *pena*

Pena: The Sound of Manipur

Seihou (Invocation)..... Traditional

Maikai Taiba (Seeking Blessings) Traditional

Kao Phaba (Catching of
the Wild Bull) M. Mangangsana Meitei (b. 1971)

about our guest artist

Marjing Mayanglambam started learning the *pena* from an early age from his father Mangangsana. Being raised up in an artistic family surrounded by artistes of Manipur and beyond, Marjing easily got to establish his musical career. He is a *pena* balladeer as well as an archivist of Laihui Ensemble and holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology. He has performed in various states of India and abroad such as in Japan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and United Arab Emirates. He demonstrated the *pena* at the "Cultural Exchange and Collaboration of Okinawan-Manipuri Music" in 2019, sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and Laihui Ensemble, held at Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. Also, he demonstrated the *pena* at the "International Workshop on Digital Archiving" jointly organized by IGNCA, CoRSAL - University of North Texas & Imasi Foundation held at New Delhi in 2019. He has composed several pieces of *pena* music that appear on his album entitled *Marjing's Pena*. It is available at most song app/sites such as Spotify, Wynn, iTunes, YouTube. Marjing is a visiting scholar in the Linguistics Department at UNT.

Thirty-first program of the 2022-2023 season
Photography and videography are prohibited

about the instrument

The *pena* is a mono-string instrument falling in the lute category, slightly similar to some of the traditional Indian stringed musical instruments such as *ravanahatha*, *ubo* or the *kenda*. It is the traditional musical instrument of Manipur, used mainly in the Lai Haraoba festival of Sanamahism. *Pena* playing is becoming a dying art as only 145 active *pena* players are reported in Manipur. The Center for Research on Traditional and Indigenous Art (Laihui), an organization headed by renowned *pena* player Khangembam Mangi Singh has mandated a vision to revive *pena* music. The *pena*, one of the oldest traditional Meitei musical instruments, was once a part of luxurious living and was played at the royal gatherings in Kangleipak. The instrument consists of two parts, the main body, *penamasa* or *dhor* which is similar to that of a violin, and the bow, *pena cheijing* or *chorr*, which resembles an archery bow rather than a violin bow. The main body is made out of bamboo, 10 to 11 inches long and 1 to 1.25 inches girth, which is fixed to a coconut shell cut in half, through two holes drilled through the shell. Two additional holes are also drilled on the coconut shell for acoustic purposes, one of which is covered by dried animal skin such as iguana skin and the other, left open. The tension of the string is controlled by a bamboo peg, called *kaan* and is fitted inside a hole drilled on the bamboo rod. A scroll, *mogra*, is also tied to the instrument tail. The bow is wooden and bears a curved flourish at one end which is made of metal. In some parts, the bow also features tiny metal bells. The string is traditionally made of horse hair but, sometimes, metal strings and strings made out of wood fiber are also used.

program notes

Almost every *pena* song sung by a *pena* balladeer has no specific date of origin and are passed down from one generation to another through oral teachings. Most of the lyrics are archaic Meiteilon/Manipuri and cannot be easily translated into English. **Seihou** literally means 'beginning of a song' or more specifically 'invocation'. Accompanied by the *pena* instrument, the balladeer narrates about the beginning and creation of the world, evolution, environment and human settlement and so on. After the *Seihou* is sung, a *pena* balladeer usually sings the **Maikhei Taiba**, which is a song about 'seeking blessings from the four ancestral directional deities of the Meitei's myth'. This song sings about Thangjing, Wangbrel, Marjing and Koubru who are the protectors and lords of each of the four directions. **Kao Phaba** means 'catching of the wild bull'. This song is taken from the legendary epic of Moirang (a land in Manipur) called 'Khamba and Thoibi'. Khamba and Thoibi are two characters well known for their romance, bravery and tragic ending. Kao Phaba is where the hero Khamba catches the wild bull in order to appease the deity/lord Thangjing. Several other characters are in this song such as the adversary Nongban, Thonglen, Chaoba, etc.

