

## Dante + Chin Duo explore shared dreamscapes in new work for Re:Sound

by Stephanie Manning



While living halfway across the country from each other due to the pandemic, vocalist Nina Dante and flutist Dalia Chin of the Dante + Chin Duo began sharing their dreams as a way to stay connected. “My dreams mean a lot to me — they feel like dialogues that our top-side self gets to have with our subconscious self, and I take them really seriously,” Dante said in a recent interview. That intersection of dreams and reality inspired *Which of my forms*, the Duo’s new work composed for the Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project’s

2021 Re:Sound Festival.

A few months into lockdown, Dante dreamed about a woman who could take two different forms — specifically, two creatures who were in a predator-prey relationship. Fascinated by how the story portrayed the dualities of the spirit, the pair chose to represent that concept through a cougar and a deer. First, Chin sent Dante an improvisatory recording that set up the “sonic world.” This six-minute track was released as a standalone work late last year, but a shortened version would later become the first of *Which of my forms*’ four movements.

The eponymous opening movement introduces the story through the flute’s “strange, magical” overtones and the vocalist’s hummed melodies. In the second movement, “The Deer / El ciervo,” Chin takes the lead voice with shimmering trills on the piccolo that Dante described as “starlight on the dark water” and “twilight hitting the fur of the deer, turning it silver, and illuminating it in life.”

Supported by Chin’s bass flute, the vocalist then embodies the predatory feline in “El puma / The Cougar” through whispering, speaking, and teeth clicking. The final movement, “El entrelazando / The Intertwining,” weaves the two creatures together, blending speaking and playing to explore the character of the woman in totality.

The entire work is supplemented by narration from both players — Dante in English and Chin in her native Spanish. That mixing of the two languages was something that “just happened,” Chin said, because of how the Duo focuses on following their instincts. Dante added that the same approach applies for extended techniques. “We’ve been using them for so long that they don’t feel extended anymore — they’re just woven into the fabric of the way we do things.”

Interspersed with the filmed performances is footage of nature filmed by the pair. Chin, who lives in Chicago, also took her camera on a small getaway to Michigan, and Dante, usually based in NYC, has been living in the forested Pacific Northwest with family. The Duo describe *Which of my forms* as an “audio-visual creation,” emphasizing how these locations are an integral part of both the video and the musicians themselves.

“We’re grateful for these places, and we recognize that they are nurturing our artistry and sustaining our very lives,” Dante said. She added that while collecting footage, “I found it meaningful to allow myself to go into a little bit of the dream space, just connecting everything back in with this piece, since it is rooted in dreams to begin with.”

The transition to making music remotely wasn’t a huge adjustment for the Duo, who frequently collaborated between separate travel and touring schedules pre-pandemic. They praised the Re:Sound Festival, which is taking place in a virtual format this year, for adhering to COVID precautions and focusing on performers’ mental and physical health.

Though the situation has been less than ideal, the experience has continued to shape the pair’s artistry. “When you’re on stage, the three-dimensional aspect is essential,” Chin said. “Now that you actually have to think of other elements, I’ve started thinking of my sound in a more visual way.”

*Which of my forms* is available online for free through June 30. Register for the Re:Sound Festival [here](#) to receive an access code.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 9, 2021.*

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