

What happens when different worlds meet? **Grace Ko** talked to musicians who combine different musical sounds with images, bringing different cultures together to create new worlds.

Symphony of synthesis

AMERICAN composers Anthony Paul De Ritis, Demetrius Spaneas and French experimental composer Benoit Granier share a common vision: to create artistic breakthroughs by building bridges and expanding horizons. It is this musical search that perhaps brought them to China to take part in a musical exchange.

In the spirit of things, the musicians are staging *The Concert of Three for Copenhagen*. The organisers wanted to send a message about **sustainability** and the environment to those attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December (the ‘three’ are society, environment and economy). They will bring this to Hong Kong’s Chinese University of Hong Kong on November 5.

“The arts can, if properly presented, bring people together and stimulate not only creative thought but great dialogue,” said Beijing based American composer Demetrius Spaneas. “Art that is used to open people’s minds to other possibilities is different – it’s more **spiritual** and pure. It’s about expanding consciousness.”

To composers like Spaneas, travel and music are related. They see exploring new cultures as expanding creative horizons. It doesn’t necessarily mean trading in one for the other. It includes **blending** the traditional with the modern, and helping them to **coexist** in the process.

“For me, this is one of the most exciting aspects of composing original music – combining the forces of traditional instruments (especially Chinese) with Western instruments and electronic musical instruments and computers,” said Anthony Paul De Ritis. “There is so much to learn from the traditional music instruments and different cultures of the world. It is very important to preserve and teach these musical traditions as well as new approaches to music composition and music creativity.”

Found in the mix

MUSIC is an international language. Most popular music is about **harmony** and rhythm, and yet each note has a beauty and meaning. It is possible to appreciate an individual sound.

Benoit Granier is a professor at Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, teaching composition and sound design. He considers himself a sound artist, and has used computers to create new sounds to get audiences excited.

“I am introducing students to the notion of computer music and trying to make them see that music is not just notes,” said Granier. “We speak about music, we speak about sound, we speak about melody and harmony. We try to understand sound, and define what it means and how composers can play with it. I am also teaching digital media and audio-visual composition where we try to create multimedia work in which video and audio are complementary.”

Music is evolving and Granier advises young composers to look at the bigger picture and create new sounds, instead of recreating old compositions.

“I believe that the academic world is a wonderful place



for young musicians to strengthen their skills and find inspiration,” said De Ritis.

“But they must embrace multiculturalism and multiple styles and methods of making music. There should be no prejudice in HOW to make music – sometimes the academy is not good at this.

“And young musicians should also learn how to run their own music business. At many schools, music business is not embraced, and very talented musicians end up not being able to find a job, or to make a living. We must also teach young musicians to be entrepreneurs.”

