

M Manhattan
School of Music

imUnsure

Jixue Yang (BM '18, MM '20, DMA Candidate), Artistic Director and Pianist

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025 | 7:30 PM
ALAN M. AND JOAN TAUB ADES PERFORMANCE SPACE

Blending piano, electronic soundscapes, and immersive visuals, *imUnsure* presents newly commissioned works that explore imposed identities (U) versus the inner self (i). The concert stage is transformed into a space for reflection, resistance, and storytelling through themes of cultural displacement, intergenerational trauma, and the search for authentic self-expression amid societal expectations. Following the premiere at MSM, *imUnsure* will tour in Texas, Indiana, and then return to New York City at THE BLANC Gallery in December, with expanded vision.

This project has been made possible with the support of Manhattan School of Music, the International Foundation for Contemporary Music's Cortona Sessions for New Music (fiscal sponsorship), and the Houston Arts Alliance's Let Creativity Happen grant. It is presented in collaboration with THE BLANC Gallery, Indiana State University Contemporary Music Festival, Montrose Project, and Houston Trinity Episcopal Church.

For more information and to support *imUnsure*, please visit: <https://yangjixue.com/imunsure>

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2025 | 7:30 PM
ALAN M. AND JOAN TAUB ADES PERFORMANCE SPACE

imUnsure

Jixue Yang (BM '18, MM '20, DMA Candidate), Artistic Director and Pianist

PROGRAM

TIAN QIN (BM '22)
(b. 2000)

GG Prelude (2025) (World Premiere)

YA-LAN CHAN (MM '16, DMA '23)
(b. 1992)

Kintsugi (2025) (World Premiere)
Lulu Yueyi Wang, Visuals

HUIJUAN LING
(b. 1990)

A Darkness Ever So Soft (2025) (World Premiere)
Lulu Yueyi Wang, Visuals

ANRUO CHENG
(b. 1988)

Reflections (2023)
III. *My Dear Absent Voice*

CHUJUN LI (MM '20)
(b. 1995)

Forgotten Maria (2025) (World Premiere)

JEE WON KIM (MM '20)
(b. 1994)

막 / 幕 / *veil* (2025) (World Premiere)
I. *Am I myself*
II. *or just a shadow?*

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Reflections

Anruo Cheng

III. My Dear Absent Voice

Frequencies oscillate in unseen waves,
Interpret the whispers of absence.
Oh here comes the Queen!
Queen of silence, your muted throne echoes my heartbeat.
Quiet, you are speaking the language of the unheard,
unspoken, unseen, unclaimed, unfamiliar, unexplored, unnoticed!

A coda of “lalala,” a silent plea,
accompanied by the absence of voice.
The voice of a pianist,
The voice of a composer,
The voice of a woman, who happens to be an Asian
Can be heard?

Forgotten Maria

Chujun Li

So you have forgotten,
for what that I did,
with what language,
using what tools,
on what part of my body
with how much strength,
you hit me.

How long did it take,
my cries and wounds to vanish.
and before they vanished,
new ones appeared.
Am I the only one who still remembers?

But I have forgotten,
how many people felt sorry that I was
a girl.
how long did your anger last?
when did you decide to run away and
take care of me on your own?
how did you save enough money to buy
me a piano?
how much you bled when you aborted
your second child?

We were, the sole cause of each other's
agony.
We were, the sole witness of each
other's tragedy.
Now we have forgotten our crimes.
Will we ever forget our suffering?

막 / 幕 / *veil*

Jee Won Kim

바람은 지나가고 나는 그 틈 사이에서 숨 쉰다.

风掠而过，我在縫隙之间呼吸。

The wind passes through

I breathe between the gaps.

달는 듯, 닿지 않는...

仿佛触碰，却终未相触.....

So near to touch, yet never meeting...

나인지, 그림자인지.

是我，还是我的影子。

Am I myself, or just a shadow.

I sometimes felt lonely; it seemed like nobody heard my voice.

NOTES FROM THE COMPOSERS

GG Prelude

Tian Qin

This is a very narrative piece. It takes on various tones of mine when I try to communicate with my memories. Specifically, the memories where I set standards for myself based on other people's values. The standards often related to whether or not I was a good girl, as if they had all been there before, as if they invented the ruler. I was left wondering — they were once a girl, too. Just like me.

I tried to hold my memories closer with both hands to get a better look at them, but they were like liquid that I couldn't hold in my palm.

GG stands for "Good Girl". People say "good girl" when they appreciate their female dog. Am I just a dog of yours?

Kintsugi

Ya-Lan Chan

This piece draws on the idea of Kintsugi—the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, silver, or platinum, where the cracks are cherished as part of the object's history—as a response to Jixue's project. It reflects on embracing the broken parts of life—not concealing them, but transforming them into an art form. Infused with the tranquil energy of meditation, mantra-like chanting threads through the music to shape a contemplative soundscape.

A Darkness Ever So Soft

Huijuan Ling

When I think about the relationship between Asian baby boomer parents and their millennial children, I think of the last five words of Haruki Murakami's novel *The City and Its Uncertain Walls*: "a darkness ever so soft." Do they love their children? Do they care about their children? Of course. They give everything they have to their children. But during these children's early years, did their parents care about their children's mundane achievements over their well-being? Did they sign their children up for too many extracurricular activities, disregarding whether their children like them or not? Did they value the mainstream definition of "success" over who their children really are? Did they emotionally neglect their children? Did they unintentionally hurt their children due to their inability to see their children as individual human beings instead of extensions of themselves? The list goes on.

I was chatting with a Korean-American friend, and we were joking about toxic parents. She laughed and responded, “We are Asian, of course our parents are toxic.” What’s our Asian parents’ love then? What is that caring, yet controlling, hurting love? Here are my two cents: their love is like a darkness. It tenderly wraps around you and protects you from any exterior harm. Yet, it hurts, that wrap hurts. But you don’t feel like you can say anything, because the hurt is coming from a place of love. They give everything they have to you. How can you complain?

A Darkness Ever So Soft is commissioned by and dedicated to Jixue Yang for the imUnsure project. I sincerely appreciate her dedication to this project and her dedication to this collaboration.

Reflections

Anruo Cheng

Reflections is a piano suite with three movements dedicated to pianist Eunmi Ko and the MUTED project. It explores the intricate relationship between Asian females and the Western world, touching on stereotypes, cultural differences in politeness, self-awareness of societal unfairness, and the challenges faced by individual Asian women when asserting their voices in the face of impolite or unjust treatment.

III. My Dear Absent Voice

Sometimes, I find it challenging to make my voice heard in the face of injustice. This difficulty can be attributed to various factors, including my conservative cultural background, strict family upbringing, or societal neglect within Western contexts. It may take the form of active suppression, passive dismissal, or a combination of both, making it a complex topic. The purpose of this movement is to portray the obstruction and stifling of self-expression as an Asian woman in the Western society.

Forgotten Maria

Chujun Li

Forgotten Maria reflects on the harm I received from my mother while also seeking to understand her through the pressures she faced—many of which I only came to recognize later. For example, I didn’t know until adulthood that my father’s family had been disappointed I was born a girl, or that my mother had been forced to abort another pregnancy due to the one-child policy. Just as she caused me pain, I began to realize that I may have caused her suffering as well.

My mother often asked me to sing Gounod’s *Ave Maria* at dinner parties. As a young singer, I knew only its lyrical melody, unaware of the Bach prelude beneath

it. While composing this piece, I realized that—just as I hadn't known the original Bach—neither my mother nor I knew our history objectively. Our memories had been twisted and worn away over time. Musical phrases drawn from *Ave Maria* form the basis of the work, as the inside piano and keyboard move through agreement, conflict, and resolution—mirroring our complex relationship.

막 / 幕 / *veil*

Jee Won Kim

Has anything you did ever felt as if it passed through some kind of veil and was understood differently? Since I was very young, I have lived with the worry that others might see me through a veil of prejudice and misunderstand me. This fear grew stronger after I came to the United States. My words and actions seemed to pass through a veil of “because she is Asian, because she came from somewhere else” before reaching others, with Koreans, they seemed to pass through another veil of “because she is Korean, she should say this” before being understood. This may be nothing more than my own illusion, or maybe it is reality. But what is certain is that because of it, I have changed, and I have become lonely.

I sometimes wonder, what if my true self is still behind the veil, and what people actually see is not me but just my shadow? And when I try to become one of them, when I change myself to fit their expectations, could it be that my real self is disappearing, and my shadow is what I'm becoming?

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

Jixue Yang (BM '18, MM '20, DMA Candidate)

Born in China, Jixue Yang is a classically trained pianist who explores the voices and aesthetics of contemporary artists through interdisciplinary collaboration, expanding the piano's expressive possibilities across acoustic and experimental dimensions.

She has received the Gold Award at the Singapore International Music Competition, Second Prize at the Charleston Contemporary Music Competition, and top prizes at the Ad Libitum Piano Competition, and was named Pianist of the Season. She has performed at venues such as Akoesticum, Hochschule für Musik Leipzig, Konzertsaal der HfM Dresden, DiMenna Center, Frederick Loewe Theater, and Opera America. Her past residencies include SinusTon Festival, Nief-Norf Summer Festival, Steinhardt Pulsing and Shaking Music Festival, Creative Dialogue IX, Negentropy Nexus by Absonus Lab, Cortona Sessions, and DramaEtMusica Series.

Yang has served as a guest artist at institutions including the University of Florida, University of Pennsylvania, Bowling Green State University, Indiana State University, and Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, presenting lectures, workshops, and performances that amplify underrepresented voices in contemporary music.

A founding member of the electroacoustic trio Apply Triangle, she co-produced their acclaimed three-volume album *Oxalis Triangularis*, which was supported by Chamber Music America's Ensemble Forward Awards and praised by *I Care If You Listen* and *Neon Music Reviews* for its artistic breadth and sonic innovation.

Her ongoing project *imUnsure*—which merges piano, electronics, and visual media to explore diasporic narratives by East Asian women artists—is supported by the Houston Arts Alliance, Manhattan School of Music, Indiana State Contemporary Music Festival, THE BLANC Gallery, and the Houston Montrose Project.

Yang earned her B.M. in Classical Piano and M.M. in Contemporary Performance from Manhattan School of Music, where she is now completing her D.M.A. Her teachers include Anthony De Mare, Margaret Kampmeier, Phillip Kawin, Solomon Mikowsky, Inesa Sinkevych, and Christopher Oldfather.

Tian Qin (BM '22)

Chinese composer Tian Qin is known for her music's compelling, humorous, and visually evocative qualities. She enjoys integrating text, craft, film, and choreography into her compositions, often pushing the boundaries of traditional forms while incorporating her cultural heritage, and focuses on engaging communal experiences. Her music has been workshopped or performed by many ensembles, such as the Windscape Ensemble, Unheard-of Ensemble, the Rhythm Method, Duo Impetuoso, Loadbang, Kenetic, Musiq, Loop 38, and Roomful of Teeth. She is also the winner of the 2024 American Guild of Organists Student Commissioning Project.

Additionally, she is a teaching artist at MusiqLab at Madison High School, American Festival for the Arts, and a music theory instructor at Opus One Chamber Music School. She is also an active member of Gamelan of the New Moon and a raga student of Ragavan Manian.

Tian Qin graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory (grades 7–12), Manhattan School of Music (BM), and Rice University (MM, Brown Fellowship). She studied composition with Ying Din, Marjorie Merryman, Karim Al-Zand, Shi-hui Chen, and Pierre Jalbert, and piano with Xiangjun Yu and Jiayin Li.

Ya-Lan Chan (MM '16, DMA '23)

Taiwanese composer Ya-Lan Chan is committed to the collaborative nature of music-making, emphasizing the use of musical gestures to craft nuanced, transparent soundscapes. Her interdisciplinary collaborations span visual, dance, and lighting design, reflecting her dedication to exploring diverse artistic mediums. Recently awarded the 2025 Nief-Norf Festival International Call for Scores Winner and several other distinctions, including the winner of the 2024 INMF New Voices Competition, the 2022 Manhattan Prize for String Quartet, and a finalist in the 12th Mivos Kanter String Quartet Composition Prize. She received commissions from the Percussion Ensemble at Manhattan School of Music, New Chamber Ballet, and Project 23.6 N, as well as grants from the National Culture and Arts Foundation of Taiwan. Her work is published by Babel Scores.

Huijuan Ling

Huijuan Ling is a composer, keyboardist, and educator currently based in Terre Haute, IN. She draws her inspiration from outside the boundaries of the wobbly concept of Western art music and enjoys the process of discovering and negotiating a sound world that feels authentic both to her and her collaborators. Her music has been performed by ensembles and musicians such as the Utari Duo, Cracow Golden Quintet, Ciompi Quartet, Yarn/Wire, Imani Winds, JACK Quartet, Line Upon Line Percussion, Patchwork Duo, cellist Ashley Walters, pianist Gloria Cheng, Kris Rucinski, and others at music festivals and conferences such as Chopin and Friends Festival, RED NOTE New Music Festival, Yarn/Wire International Institute, Weekend of Chamber Music, Nief-Norf Summer Festival, Line Upon Line Winter Composer Festival, and more. Huijuan holds degrees from Duke University (Ph.D. and A.M.), supported in part by a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; as well as from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (M.M.), and Shanghai Conservatory of Music (B.M.). She currently serves as a lecturer in composition and music theory at Indiana State University and taught courses and lessons at Duke University, Elon University, and Line Upon Line High School Composition Workshop. She is the associate director of Synthase Music and the coordinator of Synapse Composition Workshops.

Chujun Li (MM '20)

Chujun is a composer who explores her connection with her Chinese roots through both her curiosity about timber and her engagement with political issues. Her recent work 诗*Two二Po首ems* explores the sonic relationship between

Chinese and English while including texts that reflects on Chinese political issues during Shanghai's COVID lockdown. In another work, 失语 *The Loss of a Poem*, she extends her exploration in the Chinese sonic world with the help of audio analysis tools and builds a close connection between flute sounds (modified by electronics) and Chinese sounds. Chujun Li is currently pursuing a doctorate degree at Boston University, where she is studying with Richard Cornell. She has worked in commission and workshop settings with ensembles such as Unheard-of// Ensemble, Sound Icon Ensemble, Mivos Quartet, Byrne:Kozar:Duo, and collaborated with individual musicians such as Anna Piroli, Tyler Neidermayer, Rose Kow, Adeline DeBella, and Grace Helmke.

Anruo Cheng

Anruo Cheng, born in China, is a Seattle-based composer, educator, music producer, and electronic musician. In 2025, she was selected as a resident artist at the Blue Mountain Center in New York. As a producer, Cheng produced the album, SCI Super Regional Mixtape, 2023–2024. Demonstrating her influence in the contemporary music field, she has served as an adjudicator and jury member for professional events such as the SEAMUS Conference, SCI Mixtape, and IAWA New Music Competition.

Currently, Cheng holds the position of music technology specialist for VoxNovus's Composer's Voice Concert Series. Previously, she worked as a composition lecturer at the Frost School of Music, University of Miami, teaching courses in music theory, music analysis, and electronic music ensemble. Cheng earned her Doctoral degree in Music Composition and a Master's degree in Media Writing and Production from the University of Miami.

Cheng's music fields range from contemporary acoustic music, electroacoustic music, electronic instruments/installations design, popular music, and film music. She is a prize-winning composer whose works have been performed worldwide, including UT Contemporary Music Festival, Aural Compass Projects Competition, New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, N_SEME Festival, NYC Contemporary Music Symposium, Research on Contemporary Composition (ROCC), Aspen Composer's Conference, Fifteen-Minutes-of-Fame concert, Stelvio Cipriani Competition for Film Music, and Chinese National Popular Music Competition. Additionally, many other works of hers were released by RMN Records, UK, and EMII Enterprise, US.

Jee Won Kim (MM '20)

Jee Won Kim is a composer based in the US and South Korea. Her music explores the relationship between time, space, and perception, often drawing inspiration from literature, visual art, and architecture. She focuses on creating a personal sound that extends beyond the auditory, opening possibilities for music to be seen, touched, and felt as much as it is heard. Her music has been workshoped and performed by ensembles and artists including Festino Chamber Choir, International Contemporary Ensemble, Yarn/Wire, Unheard-of Ensemble, Studio Dan, John Popham, Matti Pulkki, Ben Roidl-Ward, Alberto Menjón, Clara Cho, and Jixue Yang. Her electronic works have been featured at ICMC and SEAMUS. She recently received a special prize in the 5th Ise-Shima International Composition Competition and was a finalist for the 2021 Morton Gould Young Composer Awards. She is a co-founder of the Korean women composers' group, **이레** ENAE.

Jee Won holds a BM from Chung-Ang University and an MM in Composition from Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Reiko Fütting. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, studying with Aaron Travers and David Dzubay.

Lulu Yueyi Wang

Lulu Yueyi Wang is a multidisciplinary artist born in Shanghai and based in New York. She works with painting, projection mapping, and sculpture to create evolving spaces that evoke intense emotions like ecstasy, doom, and transcendence. These works explore themes of constraint and liberation drawn from her autobiographical experiences.

She is currently pursuing a BA in Visual Arts and Computer Science at Columbia College, Columbia University, expected 2026. Her works have been exhibited in Shanghai, China, Nantes, France, Massachusetts, and New York. She has been recognized with the Barnard Viz Wall Art and Futurism Competition Award, featured in ICME, and selected as a finalist in the MIT AI Filmmaking Hackathon. Professionally, she has worked with the Computational Design Lab directed by Dr. Lydia Chilton, the Imaging and Vision Laboratory directed by Dr. Shree Nayar, the Design Tool Lab directed by Dr. Tiffany Tseng, the curatorial department of the Toledo Museum of Art, and contributed to Matthew Day Jackson's solo show at Pace Gallery.