



LIVES OF THE PIANO | 25TH SEASON CELEBRATION

***The Twelve Chinese Zodiac
Animals, Books I & III***

Book III World Premiere

Lisa Yui (MM '00, DMA '05), Director

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2025 | 7:30 PM
GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL

The Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals, Book I & III

Lisa Yui (MM '00, DMA '05), Director

Panel Discussion: Following the performance, join composer Vincent Ho joins Lisa Yui and the pianists in a conversation about the creation, collaboration, and interpretation of The Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals. Dr. Vincent Ho's involvement is generously supported by Walt and Irene DeBoni.

PROGRAM

VINCENT HO
(b. 1975)

The Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals, Book I (2022) and
Book 3 (2025, World Premiere)

Book 1, No. 1: Mischievous Mouse

Book 3, No. 1: Rat Race

Ziyi Yu (MM '24, DMA Candidate), piano

Book 1, No. 2: Little Ox

Book 3, No. 2: Stubborn Bull

Annie Cao (MM '24, DMA Candidate), piano

Book 1, No. 3: Dance of the Tiger Cubs

Book 3, No. 3: Tiger Mom

Tzu-Wei Kang (MM '24, DMA Candidate), piano

Book 1, No. 4: Prancing Bunny

Book 3, No. 4: Down the Rabbit Hole

Max Hammond, piano

Book 1, No. 5: Little Dragon

Book 3, No. 5: Chasing the Dragon

Dayeon Jin (BM '24, MM '26), piano

Book 1, No. 6: Playful Snakelets

Book 3, No. 6: Snake Pit

Baoqi Zhu (MM '25, DMA Candidate), piano

PROGRAM NOTES

The Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals, Books I-III

Book 1 of “The Chinese Zodiac Animals” is a collection of solo piano works that depict each animal in their young ages. These works were designed to enrich students’ music education while introducing them to Chinese cultural themes, musical styles, and traditional performance practices in pianistic form. The following Book 2 depicts the animals in their teenage years and presented in the form of preludes and fugues. For Book 3, the animals are depicted in their adult years and are presented in the form of virtuosic concert études. The musical materials from Book 1 are retained in Books 2 and 3 but developed in ways that reflect each animal’s growth and pianistic advancements.

—Vincent Ho

*Illustrations by Lilith Ohan

About *The Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals, Book I*

Mischievous Mouse 调皮的老鼠

A little mouse cautiously pokes its head out of its hiding place to see if anyone is around. When it sees it is safe, it starts scurrying about in a playful manner while trying not to get caught. The mouse constantly runs around, jumping from one spot to another, and gets into places it’s not supposed to be in. Pianistically speaking, the music is built around mirroring techniques—where both hands are playing the same musical ideas at the same time as mirror inversions of each other.



Little Ox 小牛犊

A little young ox (or calf) is stomping its hooves and trying to prove its strength by pushing objects out of its way. In the middle of the piece, the ox gets frustrated over one large heavy object and starts stomping a hoof exasperatedly. It eventually does push the object aside and proceeds to move along. Palm clusters are incorporated to represent the stomping of the ox.



Dance of the Tiger Cubs 虎崽之舞

A litter of baby tiger cubs are play fighting together (exhibited in the form of a rustic dance). Frequent meter changes are used to capture their rebellious and playful characters—from 5/8 to 2/4 to 7/8 and to 3/4 time. As the music unfolds, the little tigers start taking their play fighting into other areas while jumping around each other in their playful manner.



Prancing Bunny 腾跃的兔子

A little bunny is happily prancing around in a field while enjoying a bright sunny day. The bunny rolls and jumps from one place to another, all while appreciating the soft grass underneath its feet and the many flowers it discovers. Broken chords—arpeggiated in a variety of up/down directions—depict the carefree spirit of the bunny.



Little Dragon 小龙

A baby dragon learns to fly for the first time. On its first attempt, it falls back down to the earth. It recovers and flies back up, only to fall again but into a nearby lake. The little dragon then flies out of the lake, shakes water off its tail, and flies away. Being that this is a mythical creature, the music is meant to be played freely and expressively like a mystical dream. Use as much imagination as possible to capture your own musical portrait of this little dragon.



Playful Snakelets 蛇影蛇行

Two baby snakes (or snakelets as they are called) are playing with each other throughout the piece. They are cast in two different keys to distinguish themselves from one another and are constantly slithering around as they explore different registers of the keyboard.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Annie Yu Cao, piano

Annie Yu Cao began her piano studies at the age of four and has blossomed into a mature and enthusiastic performer. Since 2010, she has participated in numerous festivals and competitions ranging from local to international stages, consistently earning recognition and first prizes. The past few years have been especially noteworthy, with award-winning performances at the B.C. Performing Arts Festival, the Canadian Music Competition, Vancouver International Music Competition, Pacific Youth International Piano Competition, and others.

Annie graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Music in Performance with Honors. She recently completed her Master of Music and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree under the tutelage of Jeffrey Cohen at Manhattan School of Music. Beyond her academic and performance pursuits, Annie is the founder and executive director of the Pacific Opus Music Festival, launched in Vancouver in the summer of 2025. The festival brings together distinguished faculty from leading conservatories and provides young musicians with opportunities for intensive study, performance, and artistic collaboration in a vibrant, supportive environment.

Max Hammond, piano

Max Hammond, described as a pianist who plays with “the finesse, the grace, and the ebullience of a Mozart” (Harry Rolnick, *The Classical Music Network*), is passionate about putting canonical works in conversation with new voices. An avid performer of contemporary music, he has premiered works by numerous composers, including Martin Bresnick, Viet Cuong, Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, and Carlos Simon. As of the 2024–2025 season, Max is a core member of the award-winning two-piano/two-percussion ensemble icarus Quartet. Winner of Juilliard’s Concerto Competition, he made his Lincoln Center debut in Alice Tully Hall performing Schoenberg’s Piano Concerto, Op. 42, with the Juilliard Orchestra under David Robertson. A dedicated interpreter of Schoenberg, Max also performed Pierrot Lunaire at the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna in honor of the composer’s 150th birthday. This season, he made his Carnegie Hall debut in a concert exploring the work of Meredith Monk, performing alongside Monk herself. Max graduated Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude from Yale College with a B.A. in mathematics, where he studied at the Yale School of Music with Wei-Yi Yang. He is currently pursuing a Master’s degree at the Juilliard School under Julian Martin and Soyeon Kate Lee.

Tzu-Wei Kang, piano

Tzu-Wei Kang, born in Taipei, Taiwan, began studying piano and voice at the age of six after discovering music at age three. During her studies in Taiwan, she balanced a demanding academic course load while also achieving proficiency in bassoon and dulcimer. Her love and dedication to music remain unwavering. After studying with Dr. Solomon Mikowsky and Dr. Jiayin Li at Manhattan School of Music, she developed a mature understanding and refined taste in classical music. As an accomplished concert pianist, her notable performances include CLANG, Tzu-Wei Kang's Solo Recital at Taipei Eslite Performance Hall and a recital in 2022 at Taiwan National Recital Hall. In addition to her solo work, she is an active chamber musician and ensemble performer. She was invited to perform in a master class held by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center at the Rose Studio, where she received acclaim. She has also presented several chamber concerts during her studies, including *Trilogy: Piano Trio Concert* (2023) and *Sonic Palette: Chamber Music Concert with Paintscape* (2024). She earned both her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees at Manhattan School of Music and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree there.

Dayeon Jin, piano

Dayeon Jin has performed at major venues including Lincoln Center's Bruno Walter Auditorium, Philadelphia's *Dunwoody Village Recital Series*, and the Grévin Museum concert hosted by Lang Lang. Her performances have been praised for their poetic sensitivity, depth of expression, and elegance of tone. She was awarded Second Prize at the PIPC International Piano Competition and received top honors from the NYIAA, YEUM, and Liszt competitions. As Artistic Director at the CCC Classic Culture Center, she continues to connect with audiences through creative programming and artistic collaborations. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree at Manhattan School of Music under Dr. Solomon Mikowsky and is currently pursuing her Master of Music with Dr. Marc Silverman, while concurrently studying for an Artist Diploma at the École Normale de Musique de Paris with Prof. Ramzi Yassa.

Ziyi Yu, piano

Ziyi Yu was born into a musical family in 2000. She showed great talent for piano from an early age and has received awards from numerous competitions, including Second Prize in the 2nd Group of the Twentieth International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition for Children and Youth. Her recent performances have taken her to the United States, Shanghai, Singapore, and South Korea. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree with Marc Silverman at Manhattan School of Music.

Baoqi Zhu, piano

Baoqi Zhu began piano studies at the age of 12 with Yingxin Wang and Yafen Zhu. He later studied at the Middle School and Conservatory of the China Conservatory of Music under Changxin Guan. In 2025, he earned his Master of Music degree from Manhattan School of Music, studying with Solomon Mikowsky and Jiayin Li, and is now pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree under Dr. Li's guidance. A consistent scholarship recipient, he has received top awards including the Gold Medal at the Gulangyu National Youth Piano Competition and was a finalist in the 2024 Eisenberg-Fried Concerto Competition. As a recitalist, he has presented programs such as *Chopin: 24 Études* and *Literary Liszt*. Passionate about collaboration, he has performed concertos with the Belgian National Symphony and the China Conservatory Symphony, as well as chamber works at the Musica Mundi Festival. He has also participated in master classes with Yoheved Kaplinsky, Boris Berman, and Menahem Pressler, receiving high praise.

Vincent Ho, Composer

Vincent Ho is a multi-award winning composer of orchestral, chamber, vocal, and theatre music. His works have been described as “brilliant and compelling” by *The New York Times* and hailed for their profound expressiveness and textural beauty, leaving audiences talking about them with great enthusiasm. His many awards and recognitions have included five Juno Award nominations, Western Canadian Music Award’s “Composer of the Year”, Harvard University’s Fromm Music Commission, The Canada Council for the Arts’ “Robert Fleming Prize”, ASCAP’s “Morton Gould Young Composer Award”, four SOCAN Young Composers Awards, and CBC Radio’s Audience Choice Award (2009 Young Composers’ Competition).

During the period of 2007-2014, Dr. Ho has served as the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra’s composer-in-residence and presented a number of large-scale works that have generated much excitement and critical praise. His *Arctic Symphony* has been described “a mature and atmospheric work that firmly establishes Ho among North American composers of note” (*Winnipeg Free Press*). His percussion concerto, titled *The Shaman*, composed for Dame Evelyn Glennie was hailed as a triumph, receiving unanimous acclaim and declared by critics as “Spectacular” (*The New York Classical Review*), “A powerhouse work” (*The Winnipeg Free Press*), and “Rocking/mesmerizing...downright gorgeous” (*The Pittsburgh Gazette*).

Born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1975, Vincent Ho began his musical training through Canada’s Royal Conservatory of Music where he earned his Associate Diploma in Piano Performance. He earned his Bachelor of Music from the University of Calgary, his Master of Music from the University of Toronto, and his Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Southern California. His mentors have included Allan Bell, David Eagle, Christos Hatzis, Walter Buczynski, and Stephen Hartke. In 1997, he was awarded a scholarship to attend the Schola Cantorum Summer Composition Program in Paris, where he received further training in analysis, composition, counterpoint, and harmony, supervised by David Diamond, Philip Lasser, and Narcis Bonet.

Lisa Yui, Interim Associate Dean of Doctor of Musical Arts

Described as “a musical phenomenon” (*Pianiste*), Yamaha Artist Lisa Yui enjoys a multifaceted musical career as pianist, lecturer, educator, author, and musical director. Since making her concerto debut at the age of seven, she has performed throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. She is the top prizewinner of the Senigallia International Piano Competition in Italy, and has twice been the recipient of a Canada Council Scholarship. Dr. Yui has performed as soloist with prominent orchestras including the Tokyo Symphony, Polish National Radio, Toronto Symphony, and Krakow State Philharmonic. Dr. Yui’s insightful writing on a variety of topics has appeared in numerous publications, and she has worked extensively with cutting-edge music technology through her long-distance remote lessons and performances using the Yamaha Disklavier, an acoustic/digital hybrid player piano. Lisa Yui is on the faculties of Manhattan School of Music, Juilliard Extension and is a regular guest instructor on the online platform, tonebase. At Manhattan School of Music she received the School’s 2018 President’s Medal for Distinguished Service, and currently is serving as the Interim Associate Dean of Doctor of Musical Arts.

ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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