

## Swiss-Chinese Composer YANG Jing (born December 1963)

Composer YANG Jing (楊靜 Yang - Family name /Jing - given name) is also an internationally renowned pipa virtuoso. She began studying the pipa at the age of six and was admitted to the Henan Traditional Opera Music School at twelve. From age thirteen to eighteen, she worked in a traditional Chinese opera music theater. She later pursued advanced studies at music institutions in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Switzerland, earning multiple master's degrees in modern composition, theory, and jazz composition. Active on the international stage since 1986, she performs and composes across classical, contemporary, jazz, and improvisational idioms, crafting a uniquely personal musical language. Her works have been performed worldwide at renowned music festivals.

A 2018 Swiss NZZ review wrote:

*“Yang Jing’s compositions not only integrate musical traditions into the modern era, but also merge instruments and playing techniques from East and West. This ‘East-to-West’ approach opens up an entirely new world.”*

### Childhood and Early Education

Growing up during the Cultural Revolution, YANG Jing lacked access to western music tradition. From the age of six, she taught herself to play various instruments, including the pipa. By age ten, she was already teaching older students. At twelve, she entered a local school for traditional opera music in Henan, and by thirteen, she joined a regional theatre troupe as a pipa performer.

In 1982, she was accepted into the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where she formally studied pipa performance, Chinese music composition, and guqin performance and research.

Her early compositions, such as *Nine Jade Chains* 九連鉦 (1983) and *Disclosure* 品訴 (1984), received composition and performance awards at the "Shanghai Spring Festival." Her *Dance along the old Silk Road* 龜茲舞曲 (1993) won first prizes in both composition and pipa performance in a national chamber music competition. These pieces became part of the pipa curriculum at the Shanghai and Central Conservatories since the 1980s and 1990s.

### Professional Career and International Development

In 1986, YANG Jing became a pipa soloist with the China Central National Orchestra. In 1992, she composed the trio *Farewell, King Chu* and co-founded “Qing Mei Jing Yue,” China’s first independent ethnic chamber quartet. In 1998, the group held a feature concert at a German music festival, establishing a groundbreaking model of direct collaboration between Chinese non-official ensembles and foreign artists.

In 1996, she became the first artist invited by Beijing Concert Hall to give a solo pipa recital, recorded by China Central Television. That same year, she began arts exchanges with Japan. From 1997–1998, she was sponsored by the Japan Foundation to study new composition, Japanese traditional music and arts management with composer Miki Minoru.

Since 1998, she has toured internationally, collaborating with musicians and ensembles in Switzerland, United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan, Israel, and beyond. From 1999–2010, she co-curated the *Along the old Silk Road Tour* and *Hokuto International Music Festival* in Japan.

She settled in Switzerland in 2003, continuing her work as a composer, performer, and educator. In 2013, she earned a Master's in Contemporary Music Composition and Theory, as well as Jazz Music Composition and Theory from the Bern University of the Arts.

Between 2013 and 2025, she has been regularly invited to premiere new works and present concerts at festivals not only in Switzerland, also in Europe, Asia and United States of America.

YANG Jing is a member of SUISA (Swiss composers' rights society), SMG (Swiss Musicological Society), SME (Swiss Music Edition,) Y Music (Switzerland Edition) and the cultural association Aaremusik.ch ([www.aaremusik.ch](http://www.aaremusik.ch)).

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## **Compositional Practice and Selected Works**

YANG Jing's oeuvre spans solo, chamber, choral, symphonic, multimedia, and cross-genre formats. Key works include:

### **Solo Pipa Works:**

*Severed Dream of Dunhuang, Blessing Sparks, Geysers, Dance along the old Silkroad, Die bewegte Stille, Disclosures, Landscape Shānshuǐ, Peter's Easter Flowers*, among others

### **Concertos & Ensemble Works:**

- *Singing Strings – Identity* (pipa and string quartet)
- *Pipa and Pipes* (pipa and pipe organ)
- *Hidden Face of the Moon* (pipa and choir)
- *Fire · Earth* (pipa and Western orchestra)
- *Echoes of the Earth* (symphonic work)
- *Tales from River – a concert for Sextet and the Seventh* (for modern ensemble)
- *The Dragon and the Ant* (musical theatre)
- *Under a Bright Starry Sky/ Unter einem hellen Sternenhimmel* (for new music ensemble)

### **Jazz & Crossover:**

- *Yellow in Green, A Letter to Mingus, Farewell to an old Friend* (jazz ensemble)
- *Step into the Future* (jazz quartet)
- *Tales of Pipa, Time and Space of the Pipa* (multimedia concerts)
- *Fire Rider* (music for pipa and piano duo)
- *Symphony on Four Strings* (pipa multimedia concert)

### **Vocal & Chamber Works:**

- *The Big Dipper /Der Grosse Wagen* (vocal and chamber ensemble)

- *My Child Shall Breathe Freely/ Mein Kind soll frei atmen – An Evening of Art Songs*
- *In the Garden / Im Blütengarten* (chamber and vocal concert)

## Ensemble and Festival Founding Activities

YANG Jing is also a proactive founder and curator:

- 1996 – "Qing Mei Jing Yue" (Chinese traditional instrument quartet)
- 2000 – "Asia Ensemble" (musicians from China, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia)
- 2001 – "Yang Jing & Jie Ensemble" (pipa and Western chamber instruments)
- 2004 – "Swiss Jazz Quintet"
- 2006 – "Different Song" Swiss jazz quartet
- 2007 – Zurich's "European Chinese Ensemble" (later "New Element Ensemble")
- 2012 – "New Oriental Jazz Orchestra"
- 2013–2025 – regular World Premiere Chamber Concert Series in Zürich

## International Collaborations and Honors

- Has performed with jazz legends such as Max Roach, Pierre Favre, and Arnie Laurence
- Appeared at different venues: Suntory Hall (Tokyo), Beijing Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall (NYC), Barbican Centre (London), Musikverein (Vienna), St. Louis Opera House, Japan's New National Opera House, and the Swiss Culture and Convention Center, Theaters in Zürich old City, among many others.
- In 1999, a British music & congress Hall in Shropshire, United Kingdom was named after her
- Her work *Dance along the old Silkroad* was the theme for Tokyo's "Silk Road Music Festival"
- In 2000, she was granted honorary citizenship in Utsunomiya, Japan
- Her solo concerts at Tokyo's Kioi Hall twice filled the hall on the same day with two different programs
- Media praise: "*Heifetz like Quality*" (United Kingdom's *Sunday Telegraph*), "*A musical icon of a new era*" (*Music Weekly*, China)
- *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) wrote in 2018:  
*"Composer and pipa virtuoso Yang Jing is a true musical polymath. At the 'Days for Music In Between Worlds' festival in Zurich, she not only presented her richly expressive music but also articulated profound insights into Chinese culture. The six-day festival featured traditional Chinese music, jazz, Baroque, and new music—a dazzling, border-crossing fusion. Astonishingly, this artistic feat was orchestrated by one woman: Yang Jing, the Chinese composer and pipa soloist who has lived in Switzerland since 2001. Most of the featured works were composed by her."*

## Awards and Recordings

- 2002 – 'Traditional Music Contribution Award', Osaka International Chamber Music Competition

- 2013 – Composition grant from the Aargau Cultural Foundation (Switzerland)
- 2015/16 – Featured artist of the Swiss Arts Council
- Albums: *Singing Strings – Identity, A Traveller's Chant, Two In One, Severed Dream of Dunhuang, Pipa Concerto, Moments, Dance along the old Silkroad*, among dozens of other physical and digital recordings released by labels in the Japan, China, Russia, United States of America, United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Germany
- Sheet music: *YANG Jing – Music for Strings and Pipa*, a collected edition of pipa works by YANG Jing, published in Switzerland and distributed in over 90 countries and regions.

## Intercultural Encounters in Sound and Thought

YANG Jing builds bridges between East and West through the union of music and thought. In addition to leading masterclasses at academic institutions, she has curated and participated in numerous cross-cultural collaborations. Her concert tours have taken her across Asia, Europe, and the United States, in partnership with artists such as Swiss jazz percussionist Pierre Favre, Israeli saxophonist Arnie Laurence, the Swiss jazz quartet *Different Song*, the *Asia Ensemble* (featuring musicians from China, Japan, Mongolia, and Korea), Norwegian multi-instrumentalist Steiner Ofsdal, American-Swiss saxophonist and composer Daniel Schnyder, Swiss composer Thüring Bräm, as well as classical groups such as *Chamber Soloists Lucerne* and *Festival Strings Chamber Players*. She has also performed with renowned symphony orchestras in many countries.

Her compositions often explore unexpected sound textures, created through the blending of instruments from diverse cultural traditions. She frequently collaborates with composers from a wide range of musical backgrounds—for example, the album *Five Elements* features works for pipa by American composers, while *Pipa Concertos* highlights new works by Swiss composers.

YANG Jing is also a published essayist, writing in both German and Chinese. Her topics include musical aesthetics and intercultural perspectives, such as in her essay *On the Relationship Between Chinese Traditional Music and Western Contemporary Music*. Since 2013, she has initiated public dialogues with cultural and academic figures prior to concerts, fostering meaningful engagement between music and society. These events are part of her music festival, *Days for Music Between Different Worlds*, a platform dedicated to intercultural exploration and artistic exchange.

