

## Composer YANG Jing

born December 1963

Yang - family name, Jing - given name, is also an internationally renowned pipa virtuoso.

YANG Jing 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 performing troupe. She later pursued advanced studies at music institutions in Shanghai, Tokyo, and Switzerland, received 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. She was the first Chinese instrumental soloist invited to perform at the *BBC Last Night Proms* with BBC Wales National Orchestra with live broadcasting worldwide.

As a global citizen and composer, Yang Jing's works have been praised in a 2018 Swiss NZZ newspaper review: *'Yang Jing's compositions not only integrate musical traditions into the modern era but also merge instruments and playing techniques from both East and West. This 'East-to-West' approach opens up an entirely new world.'*"

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### 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. 1976, at twelve she entered a local school for traditional opera music in Henan, and by thirteen, 1977 she joined a regional theatre troupe as a pipa performer.

In 1982, she was admitted to the Traditional Music Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where she systematically studied the serious and rich undergraduate programs offered by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music after the resumption of the college entrance examination: Pipa Solo, Composition of Traditional Chinese Music, and Theoretical Studies of the Guqin.

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### Professional Career and International Development

YANG Jing's early compositions, such as *Nine Jade Chains* (1983) and *Disclosure* (1984), received composition and performance awards at the Shanghai Spring Festival. Her *Dance along the old Silk Road* (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.

In 1986, YANG Jing became a pipa soloist with the China Central National Orchestra. In 1992, she composed *The King of Xi Chu Dynasty* and co-founded Qing Mei Jing Yue, the China's first independent traditional instrumental quartet in 1995. In 1998, the group held feature concerts 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, broadcasted by China Central Television. That same year, she began arts exchanges with Japan.

From 1997 to 1998, invited by the Japan Foundation's International Artist Exchange Program, YANG Jing studied composition and arts management under composer Minoru Miki, while also engaging in the study and exchange of traditional Japanese music.

Since 1998, as the freelancer musician living in Beijing while working internationally, she has embarked on extensive global tours, collaborating with musicians and ensembles from Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Israel, Norway and beyond.

From 1999 to 2010, YANG Jing co-curated and successfully presented eleven consecutive years of the *Asia Silk Road* concert tours and later the *Hokuto International Music Festival* (HIMF) in Japan.

1999, she was the first Asian instrumental soloist invited to perform at the *BBC Last Night of the Proms*. She was also invited for the opening ceremony and gave a solo concert at the concert hall in Shropshire, United Kingdom, which was named after her.

Since 2003, Yang Jing has been living in Switzerland, where she continues her work as a composer, performer and educator.

2006–2010: Lecturer for masterclass project courses at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Classical Music Department, and at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU), Jazz Department. Focus on cross-border music composition and ensemble performance practice. In 2015, she received a second Master's degree in Contemporary Music Composition and Theory, as well as Jazz Music Composition and Theory from the Bern University of the Arts. Although her solo pipa works have long been included in China's higher music education curricula, she chose to pursue further studies in Switzerland not for academic credentials, but to deepen her creative language through intercultural dialogue. This conscious act of "relearning" allowed her to reflect Eastern and Western artistic systems from within, cultivating a compositional voice rooted in both tradition and transformation.

From 2013 to 2025, she was regularly invited to premiere new works and perform concerts at festivals in Switzerland and other European countries, as well as in Asia, Canada and the United States. She has composed several complete concert works.

YANG Jing is a member of SMG (Swiss Music Research Society), SUIA (Swiss composers' rights society), SME (Swiss Music Edition,) Y Music (Switzerland Edition) and the cultural association Aaremusik.ch ([www.aaremusik.ch](http://www.aaremusik.ch)). Global Copyright ID: © SUIA IPI: YANG Jing 00477285316

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## Compositional Practice and Selected Works

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

### Solo Pipa Works:

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

### Orchestra & Ensemble Works:

- *Singing Strings – Identity* (pipa and string quartet)
- *Pipa and Pipes* (pipa and pipe organ)
- *Hidden Face of the Moon* (pipa and choir)
- *Echoes of the Earth* (symphonic work)
- *Fire · Earth* (Pipa and Western orchestra)
- *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 concerto with 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)

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### Ensemble and 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 & YUE Ensemble* (pipa and Western chamber instruments)
- 2004 – *Swiss Jazz Quintet*
- 2005 – *Different Song* Swiss jazz quartet
- 2007 – *Zurich's European Chinese Ensemble* (later *New Element Ensemble*)
- 2014 – *New Oriental Jazz Orchestra*
- 2013–2025 regular World Premiere Concert Series in Zürich with different musical settings

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### International Collaborations and Honors

- YANG Jing has performed with Jazz legends such as Max Roach, Pierre Favre, Arnie Laurence; World Music musicians: Christy Doran, Steiner Ofsdal, Daniel Schnyder; New Music composers: Thüring Bräm, Minoru Miki, Donald Reid Womack; Classical Music groups such as the Chamber Soloists Lucerne, Calmus Ensemble, Festival Strings Lucerne Chamber Players; The Jazz quartet Different Song, the Asia Ensemble, among others. She has also collaborated in various countries with renowned symphony orchestras and conductors, for example: Naoto Otomo, Muhai Tang, Kurt Masur, among others. (more current activities: [www.aaremusik.ch](http://www.aaremusik.ch))

- YANG Jing appeared at different venues: Suntory Hall (Tokyo), Carnegie Hall (NYC), Barbican Centre (London), Musikverein (Vienna), St. Louis Opera House (St. Louis, Missouri), Japan's New National Theater, the Swiss Culture and Convention Center, several theaters in Zürich old City; music festivals in Europe, USA, Asia, among many others.
- In 1999, a British music and conference Hall in Shropshire, United Kingdom, was named "YANG JING" in her honor.
- In 2000, she was granted honorary citizenship in Utsunomiya, Japan
- In 2002, Tokyo ensemble *Yang Jing & Yue Ensemble* received the Award for *Outstanding Contribution to Traditional Music* at the *International Chamber Music Competition* held in Osaka, Japan.
- In 2006, the new opera *Ai-en* (To Die for Love), composed by Miki Minoru with a libretto by Setouchi Jakuchō, featured YANG Jing's pipa artistry. Her performance extended beyond the orchestra pit—she appeared on stage, with her pipa playing forming an integral part of the opera's dramatic scenes. The production premiered with three performances at the New National Theatre Tokyo and was later staged eight times at the Heidelberg Opera Theater in Germany from 2008 to 2009.
- Her solo concerts at Tokyo's Kioi Hall twice filled the hall on the same day with two different programs
- *Sunday Telegraph, London*, praised: "Heifetz like Quality" (1998, United Kingdom); "A musical icon of a new era" (*Music Weekly*, 1996, China)
- *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ, 2018 Switzerland):  
*"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 Swiss-Chinese composer and pipa soloist who has lived in Switzerland since 2003. Most of the featured works were composed by her."*

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### A short introduction to Yang Jing's compositions and some of her concerts:

- ***Singing Strings – Identity*** Music for pipa and string quartet (Duration 75 – 90 minutes)  
 This program explores questions of cultural identity through the intimate dialogue between the pipa and the Western string quartet. Ancient timbres meet contemporary expression, revealing unexpected harmonies, contrasts, and shared resonance. The music bridges traditions, evoking both memory and transformation.
- ***Echo of the Earth*** Music for Symphony Orchestra, Choir and Pipa (Duration 75 – 90 minutes)  
 In this program, composer Yang Jing invites us to listen — to the Earth, to nature, to ourselves.  
 Her orchestral work *Echo of the Earth* gives voice to a planet in crisis, calling for awareness, humility, and care. The choral piece *The Wind is Touching Water*, together with *Hidden Face of the Moon*, written for pipa and choir, evoke the beauty and truth hidden beneath the surface — what we often overlook, yet deeply need. The pipa, together with choir, sings A

*Traveller's Chant*, reminding us that we are but guests on this Earth.

Finally, *Fire · Earth*, a pipa concerto with orchestra, speaks to the eternal cycle of life — from dust to dust, from ending to new beginning. Through the fiery spirit of the pipa and the vastness of the orchestra, it evokes transformation, renewal, and the profound connection between endings and rebirth.

- ***Erzählungen vom Fluss*** Modern Ensemble Concert (Duration: approx. 80 minutes)  
Composed for a sextet including flute, clarinet, piano, percussion, violin, and cello, accompanied by a sound installation called *Nothingness*.

Since the Big Bang, rivers have flowed endlessly, and human civilization has evolved like a river in constant change. Facing environmental challenges, we remain deeply connected to nature. Cultural diversity encompasses humans, animals, and plants alike, and finding balance between humanity and nature is a daily endeavor. The music flows like a river through diverse regions and languages, with *Nothingness* as a continuous presence—an invisible force embodying the Dao, linking motifs, melodies, and harmonies. Each movement stands independently yet contributes to the concert's overall structure.

- ***Severed Dream of Dunhuang*** – Pipa Solo Recital (Duration ca. 75 minutes)  
A musical dream spanning a thousand years along the Silk Road. The pipa solo awakens Dunhuang's echoes from the dust of time, where ancient whispers and contemporary voices intertwine, telling a poem of dreams severed, fractures, and rebirth.
- ***Meet in Goldberg Variationen*** (Duration 85 – 90 minutes)  
This concert brings together classical piano music and classical pipa music. In the first half, piano works – such as French Impressionist pieces with vivid imagery – dialogue with thematically related works by YANG Jing. The second half spans over three centuries, tracing the origins of piano music from Bach to contemporary compositions. The program not only highlights the differences between East and West, past and present, but also celebrates their resonance in the golden art of counterpoint. Here, Eastern and Western classical traditions meet to create a brilliant new chapter.
- ***Unter einem hellen Sternenhimmel — Starry Harmony*** (Duration 80 – 90 minutes)  
A quintet concert blending pipa and guqin, vocals, flute, cello, and percussion (marimba). The ensemble creates a rich and distinctive soundscape, weaving together the musical traditions of East and West. Praised for its diverse program and high-level performances, this concert transcends cultural boundaries, offering a pure and profound experience of music and cultural dialogue.
- ***Henzi's Conspiracy*** song cycle for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone (Duration: 80 – 90 minutes)  
This evening-length vocal work tells the story of two brothers in the 18th century: the Schultheiss, the authoritarian ruler of Bern, and Samuel Henzi, a gentle revolutionary who raises his voice for equality — and pays for it with his life. At the heart of the conflict is Katharina, a gifted singer and pianist, and daughter of the esteemed watchmaker Malacrida. These songs come from a musical drama composed by Yang Jing, with a libretto by Markus Kirchhofer and Maurizio Pinarello.
- ***Pipa meets Cembalo*** – (Duration ca. 80 minutes)  
A dialogue between pipa and harpsichord, daruan and theorbo, weaves a sound world that is fresh, mysterious, and enchanting. Though the instruments are rare, the music feels familiar,

captivating, and strikingly new. The program features works by anonymous English composers, John Bull, Salamone Rossi, Mozart, Bach, and YANG Jing.

- **Moments** Improvised music for pipa and drums. (Duration 65 – 75 minutes)  
A spontaneous journey through sound and time. The pipa and percussion engage in a free dialogue—each moment is born, transformed, and dissolved. Raw yet refined, the music breathes with poetic tension and contemporary spirit.

For more concert repertoire, please contact: [www.yangjingmusic.com](http://www.yangjingmusic.com)

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## Intercultural Encounters in Sound and Thought

YANG Jing's curiosity has led her to explore many avenues of discovery. In addition to giving masterclasses at academic institutions, she has curated and participated in numerous cross-cultural collaborations. For example, her CDs feature collaborations with composers from a wide range of musical backgrounds. The album *Five Elements* showcases works for pipa by American composers, while *Pipa Concertos* highlights new compositions by Swiss composers. *Moments* focuses on improvised music; *No. 9* explores the new sound of the pipa, combining the pipa with the electric guitar; *Traveller's Song* successfully integrates the pipa into the Western classical choral art; *Singing Strings – Identity* explores the organic combination of pipa and Western string quartet; *Erzählungen vom Fluss* a symphony sounds effect by using for a modern chamber music sextet. It's a concert series that illustrates feelings within civilization progresses, etc.

During her concert tours across diverse cultural regions, including Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Canada, East Africa, and the United States, she enjoys discovering all kinds of spoken languages and musical instruments, exploring unexpected sound textures created through the blending of instruments from diverse cultural traditions.

YANG Jing is also a published essayist, writing in both German and Chinese. Her work covers topics such as musical aesthetics and intercultural perspectives, including 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 before her concerts, fostering meaningful engagement between music and society. These events are part of music week 'Tage für Musik zwischen den Welten / Days for Music Between Different Worlds' – a platform dedicated to intercultural exploration and artistic exchange.



Official Website: <https://www.yangjingmusic.com/>