

Yangfan Xu
composition

Recital in partial fulfillment of the
Doctor of Musical Arts degree, 2025
Student of Kati Agócs

Sunday, March 9, 2025
4:00 p.m.
Pierce Hall

PROGRAM

Yangfan Xu

Arctic Surf Clam Rhapsody (2024)

August Baik, piano

Pear Blossom Anemoia (2024)

World premiere

Yu-Heng Wang, Ava Kenny, viola

Four Portraits in Brass (2025)

Allegretto: "Le Lutin Agile"

(The Agile Sprite)

Adagio: "La Dame Blanche"

(The White Lady)

Rondeau: "Le Farfadet Coquin"

(The Mischievous Goblin)

Dance: "Le Chat Marin" (The Sailor Cat)

The Ringers

Cal Richards, Robert Adams, trumpet

Jack Krugman, horn

Aidan Davidson, tenor trombone

Sean McCarty, bass trombone

Natalie Mundis, tuba

Jungle Sway (2023)

Juhyun Lee, clarinet

Rachel Wang, violin

Sophia Knappe, cello

Yangfan Xu, keyboard

Jakob Schoenfeld, percussion

Make Way for Ducklings (2023)

Rylan Collins, flute

Juhyun Lee, clarinet

Rachel Wang, violin

Eric Schindler, cello

Shalun Li, piano

Jakob Schoenfeld, percussion

Thanks to my cats Logan and Maisie for their love and support!

Arctic Surf Clam Rhapsody

Arctic Surf Clam Rhapsody is a solo piano composition, inspired by my unforgettable encounter with the magical world of Arctic surf clams during lunch. I was fascinated with these enchanting creatures, their serene habitat, understated charm, and culinary delight :) With this dreamy, brilliant, and flashy rhapsody, I try to capture the unique essence of these clams - quiet, low key, yet unexpectedly vibrant, just like their icy, pristine underwater realms. Moreover, I'd like to call to attention to help preserve the beautiful yet fragile aquatic environments the arctic surf clams inhabit. As we delve into the sweeping, rhythmic waves of the piano, let us reflect on the importance of sustaining the natural world that inspires such music.

Pear Blossom Anemoia

Pear Blossom Anemoia is a piece that delves into the complex emotions of anemoia—a longing for experiences and memories that one has never lived. The title draws from the pear blossom (Li Hua), traditionally symbolizing purity and innocent love. However, the dual meaning of "Li," which also signifies "farewell" and "tristesse," adds layers of bittersweet nostalgia to the work.

Structured in five distinct sections, this piece narrates a deeply personal journey, reflecting the melancholy of my old self and the poignant memories of a homeland left behind. As I have spent my entire young adulthood across the globe in the United States, this music embodies my anemoia for the years away from China, marked by a subtle undercurrent of FOMO on the life I might have known. Through the piece, I explore the intricate interplay of memory, identity, and longing. It is a cultural tribute to my roots and inheritance within the universal theme of seeking and longing.

Four Portraits in Brass

Commissioned by the Horizon Ensemble in collaboration with the Ringers, this brass sextet was composed for Horizon Ensemble's spring 2025 concert, Poulenc Party! Drawing inspiration from the whimsical and sophisticated music of Francis Poulenc, the piece explores the interplay of charm, wit, and mystery, paying homage to this beloved musical ancestor. The final movement quotes a theme from Poulenc's Sinfonietta and Violin Sonata, serving as a heartfelt tribute to his enduring influence.

Structured in four movements, the sextet draws on characters from French traditional fantasy and mythology, with each movement embodying their unique spirit through musical storytelling. While rooted in Poulenc's playful aesthetic, the piece also showcases the composer's own voice, blending modern harmonic language with vivid imagery.

Allegretto – "Le Lutin Agile" (The Agile Sprite)

Inspiration: Lutins are mischievous fairy-like creatures from French folklore, known for their agility, trickery, and love of dancing. Often appearing as household spirits, they can be either helpful or troublesome.

Adagio – “La Dame Blanche” (The White Lady)

Inspiration: A ghostly figure in French lore, the White Lady is often associated with sorrowful tales of unfulfilled love or a guardian spirit appearing near water. She embodies mystery, melancholy, and grace.

Rondeau – “Le Farfadet Coquin” (The Mischievous Goblin)

Inspiration: Farfadets are cheeky goblins from French folklore, known for causing chaos and playing tricks on unsuspecting villagers. They often appear at twilight, blending humor and mischief with a touch of menace.

Dance – “Le Chat Marin” (The Sailor Cat)

Inspiration: A whimsical character of maritime legend, Le Chat Marin is a talking cat who sails the seas, trading secrets with sailors and performing daring feats aboard ships. Known for his quick wit and clever antics, he brings laughter and surprise wherever he goes.

Jungle Sway

Jungle Sway is a piece inspired by a vivid dream I had on October 3, 2022. In this dream, I explored the hazy border between grassland and jungle on a sultry summer night, enveloped by the fragrant humidity of nature. The night blurred the line between the two landscapes, illuminated by brilliant shooting stars and colorful bright spots on the horizon, as if the starry sky had been imprinted on the ground. Amid this mesmerizing scene, an elephant and two baby elephants suddenly nudged me to run, guiding me away from a mudslide to a small rocky mound. Exhausted, the elephants lay down, and I thanked them by gathering leaves and dew to feed them before covering them with leaves as a quilt. The jungle hotel where I used to stay, as well as the entire jungle town, had been completely destroyed, and the night had suddenly become so peaceful and quiet. Since then, I had become a jungle wanderer. A week later, on another summer night, I was kidnapped by a group of men dressed as future cops. They put me on a cyberpunk train, and I didn't know where we were headed.

This surreal adventure inspired the creation of *Jungle Sway*, where I sought to capture the dream's vibrant energy and mysterious atmosphere. The music incorporates rhythmic elements and aesthetics from African music, featuring cross-rhythms, 12/8 time signatures, and percussion instruments like congas and bongos.

Jungle Sway embodies the fusion of world music influences, reflecting my journey as a composer bridging Eastern and Western cultures. Through this piece, I aim to transport listeners to a fantastical world, celebrating the interconnectedness of nature, adventure, and the bond between humans and animals.

The piece debuted at the New York Choreographic Institute's spring performance in 2023, in collaboration with choreographer Shane Urton, and was later showcased in a dance film *Now Listen* by the New York City Ballet.

Make Way for Ducklings

Commissioned by the Boston New Music Initiative, *Make Way for Ducklings* draws inspiration from the cherished American children's tale by Robert McCloskey and the beloved statue by Nancy Schön located in Boston's Public Garden. Rather than musically retelling McCloskey's narrative, this composition delves into the playful tradition of dressing the duckling statues in festive attire for holidays and seasons, a practice that has cemented these figures as endearing symbols of cultural celebration in Boston.

Through exploring images shared on social media under the hashtag #makewayforducklings, I want to capture the whimsical, adventurous, and spirited essence of Boston, a city often typified by more somber and scholarly attributes. This work is a vibrant musical homage to the city's ability to embrace joy, playfulness, and communal spirit, celebrating the lighter, more mischievous aspects of Bostonian life. *Make Way for Ducklings* invites audiences to experience the charm and delight of a beloved local tradition through a fresh, imaginative musical lens, encapsulating the heartwarming intersection of art, community, and celebration.

– Yangfan Xu

Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

all programs subject to change

Visit necmusic.edu for complete and updated concert information

Mina Nystad, *jazz voice* (GC)

Student of Carla Kihlstedt and Farayi Malek

Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Xiaoshu Tang, *piano* (MM)

Student of Minsoo Sohn

Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Xinyue Zhu, *cello* (MM)

Student of Lluís Claret

Sunday, March 9, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Bowen Chen, *violin* (DMA '26)

Student of Paul Biss

Monday, March 10, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Keller Room

Colby Heimburger, *double bass* (BM)

Student of Thomas Van Dyck

Monday, March 10, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Shijie Ma, *cello* (MM)

Student of Blaise Déjardin

Monday, March 10, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Haowen Wang, *guitar* (BM)

Student of Eliot Fisk and Jérôme Mouffe

Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Keller Room

Gabriel Nieves, *jazz saxophone* (MM)

Student of Frank Carlberg and Jason Palmer

Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Peixuan Wu, *violin* (MM)

Student of Ayano Ninomiya

Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Itay Goldstein, *jazz bass* (BM)

Student of Frank Carlberg

Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall,
and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited.
Assistive listening devices are available for all Jordan Hall concerts;
contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room.
Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

Stay connected 

N|E|C
New England
Conservatory

necmusic.edu/tonight