

Lingbo Ma

composition

Recital in partial fulfillment of the
Doctor of Musical Arts degree, 2026
Student of Kati Agócs

Saturday, October 25, 2025
8:00 p.m.
Burnes Hall

PROGRAM

All compositions by Lingbo Ma.

Downbeat

***Prelude and Fugue* (2024)**

Darwin Chang, violin
Zanipolo Lewis, cello

***Dance Unleashed* (2024)**

David Carreon, violin
Jihyeuk Choi, cello
Shalun Li, piano

Moon's Embrace

水调歌头·明月几时有

Water Melody: When Will the Bright Moon Appear? (2025)

Shiyu Zhou, soprano
Shalun Li, piano

嫦娥奔月 *Chang E Flying to the Moon* (2024)

Shalun Li, Seungwoo Moon, piano

Tales That Walk

***Playful Pairing* (2024)**

Abby Hope-Hull, oboe
Rafe Lei Schaberg, piano

***A Quixotic Fantasy* (2024)**

World Premiere

Ko-Te Chen, trumpet
Lingbo Ma, piano

Resonance Within

心经 *Heart Sutra* (2023)

Shiyu Zhou, soprano
Shalun Li, piano

***The Shape of a Thought Collapsing* (2025)**

Amelia Kazazian, flute
Colin Merkovsky, clarinet
Isabella Sun, Darwin Chang, violin
Po-Sung Huang, viola
Chih-Yi Joy Chu, cello
Dennis McIntyre, double bass
Skyler Hedblom, percussion
Jessica Yuma, piano
Timothy Tianyi Ren, conductor

*I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents –
your unwavering love and support have been my foundation ever since I was young.*

*To my mentors, thank you for nurturing my growth –
I wouldn't have been who I am without your guidance and wisdom.*

*And to my friends and colleagues –
for inspiring me, bringing me fun, lifting me up, and pushing me forward.*

Here's to more music, more moments, and all that's still to come.

Prelude and Fugue (2024)

This piece was written in a day as part of Tanglewood Music Center's Piece-a-Day project.

Dance Unleashed (2024)

Dance Unleashed opens with a melancholy and suspenseful section that introduces the motives that are later developed and "unleashed" in the main section. The main fast section, full of untamed passions, starts rather unexpectedly in the form of a wild dance. The four-note melodic cell (a broken major seventh chord inverted) keeps gaining momentum and undergoes variation and fission. In the middle section, piano and strings form a canon that is harmonically reminiscent of the slow intro but much more exposed and audacious. It then leads into a kind of quaint and elegant dance. The four-note cell soon interrupts and takes dominance. The dance keeps escalating until the piano smashes clusters in the extreme registers as a hysterical outburst. The dance ends precipitously.

水调歌头·明月几时有 *Water Melody: When Will the Bright Moon Appear?* (2025)

水调歌头·明月几时有

宋·苏轼

明月几时有？

把酒问青天。

不知天上宫阙，

今夕是何年。

我欲乘风归去，

又恐琼楼玉宇，

高处不胜寒。

起舞弄清影，

何似在人间？

转朱阁，低绮户，照无眠。

不应有恨，何事长向别时圆？

人有悲欢离合，

月有阴晴圆缺，

此事古难全。

但愿人长久，

千里共婵娟。

When will the moon be clear and bright?

With a cup of wine in my hand, I ask the clear sky.

In the heavens on this night,

I wonder what season it would be?

I'd like to ride the wind to fly home.

Yet I fear the crystal towers, jade palaces,

Are much too high and cold for me.

Dancing with my moonlit shadow,

It does not seem like the human world.

The moon rounds the red mansion,

Stoops to silk-pad doors,

Shines upon the sleepless.

Bearing no grudge,

Why does the moon tend to be full when people are apart?

People may have sorrow or joy, be near or far apart,

The moon may be dim or bright, wax or wane,

This has been going on since the beginning of time.

May we all be blessed with longevity,

Though far apart, we are still able to share the beauty of the moon together.

Su Shi (1037-1101)

English translation by Burton Watson

嫦娥奔月 *Chang E Flying to the Moon* (2024)

This piece, as the title suggests, is inspired by the ancient Chinese myth of 嫦娥奔月 (Chang E Flying to the Moon). Chang E, the heroine, is a smart woman and leads a happy life with her husband, general Hou Yi. Hou Yi is given an elixir of life by a goddess as a reward for his brave and altruistic act of helping people on the earth. Though the elixir promises eternal life, Hou Yi, content with his life on Earth, has no desire to leave his present life and join the gods in the heavens. In this piece for piano four hands, the two pianists take the roles of Chang E and Hou Yi respectively and tell the story with music. The piece starts with a meditative introduction in the high register, almost like a portrait of the moon. This is followed by a harmonious passage, reflecting the couple's peaceful and happy life together. The serenity is abruptly interrupted when Peng Meng, Hou Yi's wicked associate bursts in, attempting to steal the elixir. A frantic, percussive section conveys the struggle as Chang E defends herself but ultimately swallows the elixir in desperation. As the magic takes effect, she begins to float, gradually ascending toward the moon. At this moment, only one pianist remains, playing in the very high register to evoke the sensation of floating in the air. Hou Yi returns home at sunset, but his wife is nowhere to be found. Chang E waves at him from the moon. From that point on, the couple lives in separation, each yearning for the other. The two pianists return to the original theme, but now in different pitch levels, creating a juxtaposed dissonance that symbolizes their distance and sorrow. The piece closes with a reflection of the opening, leaving the ending open to interpretation. Is their separation permanent or will they reunite? Perhaps it has all been a dream. The choice is left to the listener.

***Playful Pairing* (2024)**

Playful Pairing portrays a spontaneous and playful interaction between the oboe and piano, akin to the whimsical moments in the animated film *Toy Story*, where the toys come to life and begin to engage with one another in the absence of humans. The piece is structured in an ABA form with a short cadenza-like intro: the outer A sections feature lively, irregular dances in 5/8 time, while the contrasting middle section offers a lyrical passage, with long, flowing melodies and harmonies that evoke a sense of calm and introspection. Together, these sections capture a sense of freedom and mutual exchange between the two instruments, as if they are responding to each other in a joyful, unscripted dialogue.

***A Quixotic Fantasy* (2024)**

A Quixotic Fantasy is a piece for trumpet and piano, inspired by the adventurous spirit of Don Quixote, though not strictly following his narrative. The piece unfolds in two contrasting sections. The first is a moderately slow, jazzy, and romantic reverie, reflecting Don Quixote's idealistic and dreamy nature. It gradually transitions into a lively, fast-paced second section, marking the beginning of the Quest. The jazzy elements remain present both melodically and rhythmically, but the focus shifts to a driving, propulsive theme characterized by the rapid repeating 16th-note figures. This section evokes images of Don Quixote's fantastic and fearless

encounters with windmills, sheep, and his many imagined foes. Overall, the piece captures the romanticism, excitement, and unpredictability of his journey, painting a vivid sonic adventure.

心经 *Heart Sutra* (2023)

《心经》(Heart Sutra) was commissioned by my pianist friend Shalun Li. Setting the text of the Chinese translation of Heart Sutra was quite a challenge for several reasons, the first one being its lengthiness and homogeneous nature. I didn't focus much on specific word painting but rather tried to capture the overall feeling that the groups of phrases evoke. The harmonic area changes along with the text, as if the text has the power to exude different harmonies. The song opens with a diatonic piano introduction whose motive foreshadows the Mantra in the final section. The climax of the piece arrives before the Mantra, when the soprano sings the line “能除一切苦，真实不虚”(The Mantra can calm all suffering, should be known as truth, since there is no deception.) in the high register. The piece keeps building up toward the Mantra, which represents the utmost simplicity and “truth.”

I'm grateful for Shiyu and Shalun's efforts on this piece. Shiyu's marvelous voice and Shalun's meticulous attention to detail have been most inspiring.

观自在菩萨，行深般若波罗蜜多时，照见五蕴皆空，度一切苦厄。舍利子，色不异空，空不异色；色即是空，空即是色；受想行识，亦复如是。舍利子，是诸法空相，不生不灭，不垢不净，不增不减。是故空中无色，无受想行识，无眼耳鼻舌身意，无色声香味触法；无眼界，乃至无意识界；无无明，亦无无明尽，乃至无老死，亦无老死尽；无苦集灭道，无智亦无得。以无所得故，菩提萨埵，依般若波罗蜜多故，心无罣碍；无罣碍故，无有恐怖，远离颠倒梦想，究竟涅槃。三世诸佛，依般若波罗蜜多故，得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提。故知般若波罗蜜多是大神咒，是大明咒，是无上咒，是无等等咒，能除一切苦，真实不虚。故说般若波罗蜜多咒，即说咒曰：“揭谛，揭谛，波罗揭谛，波罗僧揭谛，菩提萨婆诃。”

The Bodhisattva of Compassion, when he meditated deeply, saw the emptiness of all five skandhas and sundered the bonds that caused him suffering.

Here then, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. Form is only emptiness, emptiness only form.

Feeling, thought, and choice, consciousness itself, are the same as this.

All things are by nature void. They are not born or destroyed nor are they stained or pure nor do they wax or wane.

So, in emptiness, no form, no feeling, thought, or choice, nor is there consciousness.

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.; no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, or what the mind takes hold of, nor even act of sensing. No ignorance or end of it, nor all that comes of ignorance; No withering, no death, no end of them. Nor is there pain, or

cause of pain, or cease in pain, or noble path to lead from pain; not even wisdom to attain! Attainment too is emptiness.

So know that the Bodhisattva holding to nothing whatever, but dwelling in Prajna wisdom, is freed of delusive hindrance, rid of the fear bred by it, and reaches clearest Nirvana. All Buddhas of past and present, Buddhas of future time, using this Prajna wisdom, come to full and perfect vision. Hear then the great dharani, the radiant peerless mantra, the Prajnaparamita whose words allay all pain; hear and believe its truth!

Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha
Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha
Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha

English translation by the Triratna Buddhist Community

***The Shape of a Thought Collapsing* (2025)**

The Shape of a Thought Collapsing is a piece for the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. It unfolds in five thematically interrelated sections, each exploring different manifestations of shape—shape of phrasing, harmony, energy, and emotion.

The first section introduces all the musical ideas and sets an emotional palette. It features all instruments except the clarinet, whose absence becomes meaningful in the context of what follows. The second section takes the repeating note idea and transforms it into a moment of prominence for the clarinet—almost like a miniature concerto. The third section turns inward, offering space for reflection and introspection. Here, a hymn-like passage provides a moment of calmness and emotional clarity. Energy begins to return in the fourth section, where shifting harmonies create a renewed sense of motion and shape. In the final section, the music starts to “collapse” gradually. The momentum quietly dissolves, not through dramatic gestures, but through a subtle erosion, as if the “thought” itself is gently unraveling.

Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

all programs subject to change

Visit necmusic.edu for complete and updated concert information

Camden Briggs, *percussion* (BM)

Student of Matthew McKay

Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 12:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Alexander Knutrud, *trombone* (DMA)

Student of Stephen Lange

Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 12:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Shanshan Xie, *mezzo-soprano* (BM '25)

Student of Bradley Williams

Saturday, November 1, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Yoshino Toi, *collaborative piano* (DMA '27)

Student of Pei-Shan Lee and Cameron Stowe

Sunday, November 2, 2025 at 4:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

June Chung, *violin* (GD)

Student of Ayano Ninomiya

Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

John Jiang, *jazz drums* (MM 25)

Student of Billy Hart, Cecil McBee, Jason Moran, Nasheet Waits,
Donny McCaslin, Jerry Leake, Frank Carlberg, and Dominique Eade

Friday, November 7, 2025 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall

Alexander D'Astolfo, *jazz piano* (BM '25)

Student of Frank Carlberg

Saturday, November 8, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Emma Krause, *flute* (MM)

Student of Cynthia Meyers

Sunday, November 9, 2025 at 4:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Josh Gagnon, *jazz trombone* (DMA '27)

Student of Frank Carlberg

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

Charles Johnson, *bass trombone* (MM)

Student of James Markey

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

Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

—continued

Carla Fortmann, *clarinet* (MM)

Student of Christopher Elchico

Friday, November 21, 2025 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall

Jake Haskins, *percussion* (MM)

Student of Will Hudgins and Daniel Bauch

Saturday, November 22, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Colin Merkovsky, *clarinet* (MM)

Student of Andrew Sandwick

Sunday, November 23, 2025 at 4:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Joy Chen, *piano* (GD '25)

Student of Meng-Chieh Liu

Sunday, November 23, 2025 at 12:00 noon, Williams Hall

Zhiye Lin, *piano* (DMA '29)

Student of Wha Kyung Byun

Monday, December 1, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Yixiang Wang, *violin* (GD)

Student Donald Weilerstein

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Ivy Evers, *soprano* (BM '25)

Student of MaryAnn McCormick

Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Youngji Choi, *violin* (GD '25)

Student of Donald Weilerstein

Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Brown Hall

Seungwon Park, *violin* (MM)

Student of Soovin Kim

Friday, December 5, 2025 at 8:30 p.m., Burnes Hall

Xinlin Leon Wang, *viola* (MM '25)

Student of Nicholas Cords

Friday, December 5, 2025 at 8:30 p.m., Williams Hall

Upcoming Student Recitals at NEC

—continued

Hyeonmin Lee, *cello* (MM)

Student of Laurence Lesser

Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Stella Sokolowski, *CMA* (MM '25)

Student of Hankus Netsky

Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Pierce Hall

Sandy Ssu-Hsuan Li, *collaborative piano* ('25 GD)

Student of Pei-Shan Lee and Cameron Stowe

Sunday, December 7, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Williams Hall

Adam Newman, *viola* ('25 GD)

Student of Kim Kashkashian

Friday, December 12, 2025 at 8:30 p.m., Williams Hall

Food and drink are not allowed in the concert hall,
and photography and audio or video recording are prohibited.
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contact the head usher or house manager on duty or inquire at the Coat Room.
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