



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Sydney
Conservatorium
of Music

Echos of Nature



Suzhi Guo

MASTERS
GRADUATE
RECITAL

Special guests

Dr Lulu Liu
Yerim Lee

JUNE 01

1PM

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM,
RECITAL HALL WEST

Supervisor - Dr Lu LIU



Dr Lu Liu (also known as Lulu Liu) is one of the world's foremost pipa players. A trailblazer in intercultural music, Lulu has premiered over 20 new pipa works and contributed to more than 40 cross-cultural compositions. Her career spans solo albums, film soundtracks (Mao's Last Dancer), and major premieres, including Ross Edwards' *Vespers for Mother Earth* (2024) and Richard Mills' *The Butterfly Lovers* with Victorian Opera (2023). From the Sydney Opera House to the World Peace Festival in South Korea, Lulu continues to explore and expand the voice of the pipa within new music.

Passionate about intercultural collaboration, she continues to shape new artistic pathways and inspire creative communities. Lulu is Acting Deputy Associate Dean (Education), Senior Lecturer, and Discipline Leader of Intercultural Music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, where she directs the over 380-student Chinese Music Ensemble cohort. She also teaches pipa as a principal study, supervises HDR students, and serves as SCM's senior advisor for Chinese music strategy.

She has published ethnomusicological research investigating intercultural music engagement, while continuing to perform new pipa works by contemporary Australian composers. Recent projects include *Tang Suite*, commissioned and released by ABC Classics—an extraordinary work inspired by ancient music manuscripts discovered in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in Dunhuang, China.

Special guest: YERIM LEE

Yerim Lee is a collaborative pianist of wide repertoire and deep artistic insight, and an Associate Lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Through an approach grounded in empathy and musical narrative, she has developed a refined and imaginative collaborative voice, with playing noted for its sensitivity to colour, balance, and dramatic pacing.

Recent highlights include appearances at the 2024 Orange Chamber Music Festival and the world premiere of *Danza y Romanza de los Muertos* by Daniel Rojas as co-soloist with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra.

Her international engagements include a concert at Rachmaninoff Hall (Moscow Conservatorium), a duo performance with violist Jeroen Quint of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and a performance at the Sydney Opera House with the Carnegie Hall Festival Choir under the direction of Dr Lynne Gackle.

In Australia, she has collaborated with many of the country's most distinguished musicians, including Julian Smiles, Goetz Richter AM, Georg Pedersen, Dr Jeanell Carrigan AM and Michael Halliwell.



JINQI GUO

JJinqi Guo 国金 錡 is a versatile pipa soloist and educator based in Sydney. Trained at the Central Conservatory of Music in China and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, she currently teaches within the Chinese Music Ensemble program and studies under Dr. Lulu Liu in the intercultural music stream. Her international performances span prominent venues including Beijing's Great Hall of the People, Sydney Town Hall, and various concert halls across Italy, Austria, and Hungary.



A Gold Medallist at the 2026 Dunhuang Cup (AU/NZ), Jinqi is dedicated to expanding the pipa's modern repertoire. She frequently collaborates with Australian composers to develop and premiere new works, finding new ways to utilize the instrument's traditional techniques within modern musical frameworks. Her performance practice also extends beyond conventional concert halls into the contemporary art world, with appearances at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and Verge Gallery, where the pipa's raw acoustic presence interacts naturally with visual exhibition spaces.

For Jinqi, the pipa is a living canvas for cross-cultural communication rather than a historical artifact. Her intercultural chamber work focuses on weaving the instrument's signature pointillistic textures into modern, global soundscapes. Through her dual roles as an educator and performer, she aims to foster deep musical exchange and secure a meaningful, contemporary space for the pipa in the 21st century.

PROGRAM

Yingzhou Gudiao 《瀛洲古调》 (The Ancient Tunes from Yingzhou)

Traditional

- *For solo pipa*

Xinfan Yudiao Luyao 《新翻羽调绿腰》 (New Variation of Tang Dynasty Liuyao-Dance)

Composed by Jieming Yang (1982)

- For solo pipa

Tian'E 《天鹅》 (The Swan)

Composed by Dehai Liu (1984)

- For solo pipa

Wan Qiu 《晚秋》 (Late Autumn)

Composed by Dehai Liu (2014)

- For pipa and piano

guest pianist: Yerim Lee

Shuiguang Yinxing 《水光印象》 (Rippling Impressions)

Composed by Ray Lin (2026)

- For pipa and piano

guest pianist: Yerim Lee

Laoban 《老板》 (Boss)

Composed by Matthew Hindson (2026)

- For solo pipa

guest guest: Dr Lulu Liu

PROGRAM NOTES

YINGZHOU GUDIAO

(The Ancient Tunes from Yingzhou)

Traditional

The *Yingzhou Gudiao* is a seminal collection of pipa music first published in 1916, originating from the Pudong school of playing in the Shanghai region. In Chinese mythology, "Yingzhou" is a celestial island inhabited by immortals, and this suite of short pieces captures that sense of a distant, untamed paradise. These melodies represent the "Wen" (civil/lyrical) style of pipa music, which favours intimacy and restraint over dramatic virtuosity. Rather than telling a grand story, the focus is entirely on subtle, left-hand techniques, such as delicate string bends, slides, and microtonal vibratos that mimic the natural inflections of the Chinese language and the quiet rustling of nature. It is a musical style meant for self-reflection, offering a window into the instrument's classical, centuries-old roots.

XIN FAN YUDIAO LUYAO

(New Variation of Tang Dynasty Liuyao-Dance)

Composed by Jieming Yang (1982)

Lüyao (Green Waist) was a famous "soft dance" from the imperial court of the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD). Historically celebrated for its fluid, accelerating rhythm and the dancer's flowing sleeves, the original musical notation was tragically lost over the centuries. However, the title and its historic descriptions have long inspired modern composers. This "New Setting" reconstructs that ancient, elusive spirit through a contemporary harmonic lens. By shifting the melody into the Yu mode—a traditional pentatonic scale that closely mirrors the Western natural minor scale, the piece creates an atmosphere of ethereal nostalgia. It bridges the gap between ancient Chinese court music and modern compositional aesthetics, capturing the phantom energy of a dance from a millennium ago.

TIAN'E (THE SWAN)

Composed by Dehai Liu (1984)

Composed in 1984, *The Swan* is a landmark work that fundamentally transformed the modern repertoire of the pipa. Master Liu Dehai sought to break away from the traditional, rigid categorization of pipa music into purely martial (Wu) or lyrical (Wen) styles. Instead, he used the image of the swan to explore a universal, humanistic theme. Inspired by the melodic contours of the Mongolian "Pastoral Song," the piece introduces revolutionary fingering techniques, including a unique "reverse-plucking" method that produces a softer, more rounded tone. The music mimics the fluid grace of the swan gliding on water, the sudden power of its wings, and its noble posture. In this contemporary masterpiece, the swan serves as a deeply personal metaphor for purity, resilience, and a persistent longing for freedom.

Late Autumn

Composed by Bochan Li (2014)

guest pianist: Yerim Lee

Late Autumn is a deeply atmospheric, contemporary work born from quiet, interior reflection. Rather than depicting a specific narrative or historical event, this piece functions as a musical mood poem, capturing the emotional weight of a changing season—the bittersweet chill, the lingering warmth, and the stillness of falling leaves. The composition demands immense emotional maturity from the performer, utilizing the pipa's full dramatic and dynamic range. It shifts seamlessly from delicate, whisper-like pipa tremolos (lunzhi) that hang suspended in the air, to explosive, resonant chords that cut through the silence. Through its expansive use of space and tension, the piece evokes a profound sense of introspection and the universal human experience of watching time slip away.

Rippling Impressions *

Composed by Ray Lin (2026)

guest pianist: Yerim Lee

Rippling Impressions is a deeply lyrical and smooth composition inspired by the vastness of the Australian landscape, particularly the experience of traveling along its coastlines and watching the rhythmic movement of ocean waves. The piece explores how the pipa can transcend its naturally plucked, percussive nature to express long, continuous musical lines that evoke the sweeping horizon. Through a masterfully controlled use of lunzhi (the continuous five-finger tremolo) and fluid left-hand slurs, the music creates the illusion of a sustained, unbroken breath. The melodies glisten and bend, capturing the shifting colors of the sea and the fleeting interplay of sunlight on moving water. Moving away from rigid structures, the composition focuses entirely on tone color, resonance, and melodic continuity. It treats the pipa as a dynamic acoustic canvas, painting a serene, impressionistic portrait of the natural world, where individual notes roll seamlessly into broad waves of sound.

Boss *

Composed by Matthew Hindson (2026)

special guest: Lulu Liu

In *Boss*, the composer explores the idea of leadership within small collaborative environments. Rather than presenting authority as a fixed or singular force, the work examines shifting modes of control, influence, and responsiveness. Through driving rhythms, contrasting textures, and evolving gestures, the performer is required to project a strong sense of direction while remaining attuned to subtle changes in musical momentum.

Dedicated to Dr Lu Liu, this solo work reflects on her artistic journey and her role as a cultural leader in contemporary intercultural music. The piece resonates with her distinctive voice—combining virtuosity, clarity of intent, and a deep commitment to expanding the expressive possibilities of the pipa in new and global contexts.

*** = world premiere**