

# Anqi Liu

## Ph.D. Dissertation Recital

Thursday, April 14, 2022 - 7:00 p.m.  
Conrad Prebys Music Center, Experimental Theater

### *Etude for Echoes*

featuring Ilana Waniuk, Grace Talaski, Berk Schneider, Michael Jones and Joey Bourdeau

### *Etude for Friends*

for Ilana Waniuk, Teresa Díaz de Cossio, David Aguila, Peter Ko and Joey Bourdeau

*Bass Flute Solo with spatialization & live signal processing*  
for Teresa Díaz de Cossio

### *What Do You Mean?*

A live set for modular synthesizers, live signal processing, video projector and shadows  
performed and improvised by Anqi Liu

### *a window on absurd scenes...*

Violin solo with electronics & video projector for Ilana Waniuk

## Program Notes:

*Etude for Echoes* featuring Ilana Waniuk, Grace Talaski, Berk Schneider, Michael Jones and Joey Bourdeau

*Etude for Friends* for Ilana Waniuk, Teresa Díaz de Cossio, David Aguila, Peter Ko and Joey Bourdeau

These two works are a series of Etudes that use experimental methods to seek out innovative instrumental techniques. Viewing performers' kinetic capabilities, and also their psychological thresholds at the edge of their bodily and mental ecologies, these etudes keep questioning the limits of that edge. The notated score heuristically encourages the performers into a space of self-exploration. They then can observe, experience, and finally break their previous limits. Therefore, the sonic results of my works do not purely rely on what's in the score but organically arise from such behind-the-scene activities as when performers constantly engage with the score in the intimacy of their practice space. The sonic outcomes also rely on conversations between the performers and composer in individual meetings and also rehearsal circumstances.

While composing the piece, I intentionally generated paradoxes between different parameters and defined an open space for the performers to resolve such issues. Those paradoxes often become the core issues we must encounter in our meetings and rehearsals. The fundamental dilemmas of those paradoxes include the exact amount of effort one can expend upon the attempt to achieve a challenging limit. While composing the last etude, I document the process of using the above mentioned concepts and approaches with the camera. Conversations, arguments made during the rehearsals, discussions in the recording processes and other collaborative details will be documented as part of the composition. I wish that a documentary combining both audio and video will supplement the score towards the end. I will also call attention to various questions and attempt to reset the function and weight of traditional Western musical notation. The importance of the behind-the-scene factors related to one's kinetic and psychic ecology is addressed and considered as part of the score. By emphasizing corporeality and empathy, I will try to create music that organically represents all the individuals involved in its conception.

Thanks to Ilana Waniuk, Teresa Díaz de Cossio, David Aguila, Peter Ko, Grace Talaski, Berk Schneider, Michael Jones and Joey Bourdeau for their openness and willingness to share the experiences and to experiment with me for their phenomenal virtuosity.

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*Bass Flute Solo with spatialization & live signal processing* for Teresa Díaz de Cossio

As we were rehearsing the piece, Teresa told me that there was one night when she was practicing it in her room, and had the feeling of being outside of her body. In this moment, she felt that she was able to hear and see herself from the outside. I was very moved when she told me this, because this kind of experience was exactly what I was trying to achieve in writing this piece, and has been an interest in many of my recent works. Some of my most personal experiences in recent years have driven me to think a lot about who we as artists write, or play a piece for, and for me the answer has to be for oneself. I wish to compose pieces that invite performers into a personal space where they can communicate with themselves sincerely, seeking answers and release through this internal dialogue with their innermost self. A Japanese Noh theater performer, Kofumi-san used to say: if you're on stage, it's as if you're completely naked, and that a perfect artist needs the grace and dignity to exist in that situation. This quote reminds me of the exposure that one can feel going through this dialogue in front of others, and the sense of space and nakedness is an important emotional and musical part of this piece. Teresa told me later that as she practiced the piece, the experience of dialoging with herself became deeper over time, and I am so thankful to have the opportunity to work with a performer who is so sensitive to these experiences, and willing to go through the journey of working on this piece with me.

This piece is composed around the lowest pitch of a bass flute and is aimed to explore the tuning and harmonic space around the C- fundamental including multi-phonics built upon the C, microtonal deviations around the C as well as tiny melodic fragments composed centered around the C. Regarding maximally triggering the psyche space embedded in the performer's mind, in this already set tuning space to generate more sonic variations, I took circular breathing in consideration. The question I asked myself before I even wrote down one note for this piece was, how could I create a space for the player that he/she could breathe freely but simultaneously strugglingly. Time is essential: the player needs a relative freer time zone but with certain crucial constraints; although those constraints are not from the rhythm/tempo or time calculations but rather, directly coming from the sphere of muscle gestures on playing the instrument. Flutists naturally sing vowels into the flutes when they play as long song singers naturally choose the order of vowels they want to project in the long song melisma. This is an idiomatic language embedded. What if I require them to sing vowels with specificity, particularly in this relative already challenging tuning space. The entire score has no time signature and tempo indications giving the flutist the free time-space. Occasionally tempo indication is functioned to set the speed of microtonal deviations. Vowels above the notes indicate specifically how the flutist should project vowels into the flute, including in consideration of the tongue positions. With the circle: the tongue has to be positioned far back in the mouth; with the semicircle: the tongue has to be extremely front almost touching the teeth.

In the live signal processing part, I also embedded this consideration when I wrote my q-list. The q-list is to arrange the degree of parameters function in manipulating live signals. I enabled my processing to manipulate live signals in an extremely subtle way that it should be so imperceptible as almost an illusionary aura for the performer when live interacting with the signals sent by himself/herself. The degree of pitch shifting after the delay is so small with a slightly time difference from 1 second, 4 seconds, 5 seconds and 6 seconds assigned to four spatial speakers. My choices for those pitch shiftings are less than 60 in PD which result in pitches microtonally deviating in a squeezed space between eighth tone and quarter tone.

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*What Do You Mean?* A live set for modular synthesizers, live signal processing, video projector and shadows performed and improvised by Anqi Liu

What do you mean?

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*a window on absurd scenes...* Violin solo with electronics & video projector for Ilana Waniuk

Ilana and I started knowing each other's sonic realm in fall 2019 when I was composing the piece for Prebys Chair Concert at UC San Diego. At the time, I asked her if it was possible to play high partials such as 11th and 13th on the violin. She said yes, theoretically, but they are always full of uncertainties of whether or not the frequencies are projected at all. She further asked me what sonic world I was imagining. I told her that I was interested in creating sonic uncertainties so that the sonic result itself is always unpredictably flowing rather than stable.

For example, when a violin generates a tone, it becomes evident that listeners pay attention to how focused the tone is regarding loudness and intonation. I often hear the tension of the strings touching on the bow hair and crackly sounds from the woods of the instrumental ensemble. I found those almost sonic accidents and fragile sonic temporality are very poetic, but I have no idea how to organize, notate, and develop them. Because sonic grains like these come from a series of consequences regarding players' muscular and gestural behaviors while players are asked to produce a note or a sound. Therefore, those sonic fragilities are not the purpose of a composer's score nor a performer's goal, and in many cases, it is the opposite. We notate a note, a pitch, loudnesses, and even time on musical stave paper. However, how could one write down the fleeting momentary phenomenon I described here? Are those almost unnoticeable phenomena erased from musical practices?

I have similar experiences when I write. While I have to use words to describe my intention, I always doubt if words or characters on the paper (even when I write in Chinese) are the things I wish to convey. When I have to use a definition, I doubt if it contains every dimensionality I wish to have. Little by little, I started realizing I was working around the thin edge between things that can be presented and cannot, in the form of the existing linguistic system, musical score included. So when Ilana asked me about my imaginary sonic world, I couldn't find an expressive way to describe my imagination, as even when I am writing those words here, I feel I am piecing together fragments from my mind to fit in the current linguistic system but losing significant nuanced details. But part of the tragic paradox dilemma is that I have to be very articulate in writing or speaking, relying on languages, to let people understand my purpose and goals well.

It becomes precious that I worked with Ilana on this piece because after I told her my reluctance to use languages, musical languages included, to reveal my thoughts, she said, then don't. After I made the fixed media part, I sent to Ilana and asked her to free interpret based on a graphic score. The sonic materials of the fixed media part of this piece came from multiple recordings of my works that Ilana was involved as one of the performers. Those pieces more or less explore the above-mentioned "on the thin edge of being presented yet not being presented". As going through the journey together in the past two and half years, Ilana and I shared memories of concepts, techniques, and sounds that they naturally flow while making the piece. It also contains some recordings of my free improvisation on my modular synthesizers. As a consequence, while rehearsing the piece, we immersed ourselves in the concert hall, with the fixed media, Ilana tried different sounds and we made decisions together. I am thankful of going through these years-long journeys with Ilana.

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## Artist Bios:

**Ilana Waniuk** is a versatile violinist with interests ranging from improvisation to visual arts. Along with pianist Cheryl Duvall, Ilana is a founding member and co-artistic director of Tkarón:to (Toronto) - based contemporary music ensemble Thin Edge New Music Collective, and Balancing on the Edge (multidisciplinary production company merging contemporary music and circus arts). TENMC is committed to expanding the boundaries of new music, while seeking to dismantle barriers facing equity-seeking populations within the contemporary music community in Canada. Since its inception in 2011, TENMC has commissioned over 80 chamber works, and was recently awarded the 2020 Canadian League of Composers/Canadian Music Centre Friends of Canadian Music award. Ilana has toured Cape Breton and Ontario with the Bicycle Opera Project, and performed on concert stages across Canada, Italy, Argentina, Poland, Japan, Germany and Greece. She is also the curator/performer behind 'Filaments', an evolving concert program dedicated to collaboratively creating and commissioning works for violin, electronics and multimedia, made possible with generous support from the SOCAN Foundation, Canada Council for the Arts, and the Canadian Music Centre. Ilana divides her time between Tkarónto and La Jolla where she is a doctoral candidate in contemporary performance at the University of California San Diego.

**Teresa Díaz de Cossío** is a flutist, improviser, and teacher. American born of Mexican descent, and as a young adult, she taught flute lessons in China. Teresa studied at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, San Diego State University, and Purchase College in New York. From the beginning of her musical endeavors, she was inclined to reach out for meaningful engagements with marginalized communities through her creative practice. A first iteration was with Música para la Paz, a nonprofit she co founded and directed for five years. It taught music to kids in orphanages and low-income communities in Ensenada and Tecate. As a musician, Teresa has participated in concerts with Plácido Domingo, the Carnegie Hall-affiliated Decoda ensemble, and Los Tigres del Norte. As a recipient of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México's Resiliencia Sonora: Intérpretes fellowship, Teresa will be recording works of Mexican composers. Among her current interests, Teresa is investigating the life and work of Mexican female composers from the 20th century, with a particular focus on Alida Vázquez Ayala. In addition to being a DMA student in performance at UC San Diego, Teresa is currently employed at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Ensenada. There she teaches flute in the pre-college and college programs and coordinates the Festival de Música Nueva, Ensenada. This festival seeks to foster relationships between audiences, musicians and other performers from various cultural spheres and communities across the border.

**David Aguila** is a performer and composer currently based in San Diego, California where he is pursuing a Doctorate in Music in Trumpet Performance from the University of California San Diego. Aguila's multifaceted practice focuses on trumpet, electronics and music production; working in the fields of contemporary, experimental, electro-acoustic and improvised music. His current research is focused on parametric and gestural notations, sound projection practices and alternative methods to trumpet pedagogy. Aguila's primary trumpet teachers have been Ruth Still, James Thompson, Ed Carroll, and Stephanie Richards and has studied composition with Vinny Golia and Sara Roberts. Aguila received his Bachelor's degree (2013) in Trumpet Performance at the Eastman School of Music. In 2011 David was on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, during the segment Aguila solved the Rubik's Cube with one hand while playing Haydn's Trumpet Concerto. He received an MFA from CalArts (2015), Aguila studies focused on contemporary trumpet and on spatial and electroacoustic composition. Aguila has been a participant at The Center for Advanced Music Studies at Chosen Vale (2014 & 2018), Stockhausen Courses and Concerts; Sound Projectionist (2017) and Trumpet (2019), Ensemble MusikFabrik Brass Academy (2019) and the Darmstadt Ferienkurse (2021). He has worked with Marco Blaauw, Clément Saunier, Christine Chapman, Bruce Collings, Melvyn Poore, Kathinka Pasveer, Isabel Mundry and George Lewis.



**Joseph Bourdeau** is a composer, performer, and educator currently living in San Diego, California. Influenced by diverse artistic interests, his work blends music, theater, and humor, while often manipulating familiar sounds and situations in the pursuit of surreal new experiences. Particularly interested in theater, Joseph provided music for a 2018 production of *Mother Courage and All Her Children* at the Mandell Weiss Forum in La Jolla, and in 2019 presented his own monodrama *Songs from Patmos: Music for the End of the World*. Joseph holds bachelor's degrees in music education and composition from the University of South Florida, and a master's degree in composition from UC San Diego, where he is currently pursuing his Ph.D.

As a performer, **Peter Ko's** training and projects have taken him across the USA, Mexico, Canada, and Europe. His collaborations with other renowned musical artists include, Mark Fewer, the Dover String Quartet, Steve Schick, Aleck Karis, and Duo Concertante. Peter has toured Atlantic Canada with the Strataphoria String Quartet, and has served as principal solo cellist of the Pacific Lyric Association Opera, Cello Bash, and San Diego City Ballet Orchestra. He has also been the cellist of the Integral String Quartet, performed with UCSD's Palimpsest Ensemble, Renga, and the soundSCAPE music festival in Italy. His musical interests span from the early renaissance, to the experimental avant garde, and is always eager to try something interesting and new. Peter has received his significant musical training from Charles Curtis, Vernon Regehr, Ashley Walters, and Mario Ramirez. Further influences include Adrian Brendel, Mark Fewer, and Nancy Dahn. He has also received coachings from many other great world-class artists, including Lynn Harrell, Felix Fan, the Gryphon Trio, the Danish String Quartet, and many others. He holds a MMus from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and a BA from University of California San Diego. He is currently working on towards his DMA in Contemporary Music Performance, at UC San Diego.

**Berk Schneider**, trombone ([berkschneider.com](http://berkschneider.com)), serves as an advocate for the arts by cultivating research-creation projects that incorporate an interdisciplinary approach to technology and analysis of social meaning-making devices, promoting prescriptive methods that bring communities of musicians closer together. His collaborations are varied, having worked with musicians such as Joshua Bell, Josh Groban, conductors Valery Gergiev, Brad Lubman, Enno Poppe, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Helmuth Rilling, Robert Spano, composers Beat Furrer, Philip Glass, Helmut Lachenmann, Alvin Lucier, actor Alexander Fehling, the Akron, Firelands, and Houston symphonies, Ensemble Modern, Schauspiel Frankfurt, as well as creative director Heiner Goebbels. He is a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory, Rice University, Frankfurt University of Music, and has been a finalist and honorably mentioned in numerous international trombone competitions, including the Robert Marsteller Competition and Lewis Van Haney Philharmonic Prize.

**Michael Jones** is a percussionist and conductor based in Southern California. His work focuses on championing new pieces of the 21st century as well as works from the 20th century avant-garde. He is particularly interested in time, memory, perception, and the lyricism of embodied performance. Composers he has worked closely with include David Macbride, Michael Pisaro, Kevin Good, and Matt Sargent among others. He has performed at the LA Philharmonic's Noon-to-Midnight Festival, The Other Minds Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, The Dog Star Orchestra Festival, The Hartford New Music Festival, and the Vernon Salon Series. He's completed residencies at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (Germany), The Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (Alberta), The Nief Norf Summer Festival (Tennessee), and others. He's appeared in the past as a member of the Hartford New Music Collective, the Hartford Independent Chamber Orchestra, the Other Minds Ensemble, the William Winant Percussion Group, Emyrean Ensemble, and ECHOI Ensemble. He regularly performs with red fish blue fish, the graduate percussion ensemble at the University of California, San Diego. He directs its undergraduate counterpart, one fish two fish, and in 2021 became director and conductor of the UCSD Wind Ensemble. As a performer and researcher of non-Western music, Michael has performed percussion music from Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, West Africa, and Iran, studying with Rogerio Boccato, John Amira, Joe Galeota, Shane Shanahan, and Keyavash Nourai. In 2013 he completed study in Ghana at the Dagara Music Center (Medie) and the Dagbe Cultural Center (Kopeyia) where he studied Dagara, Ewe, Asante, and Dagomba music.

**Grace Talaski** is a clarinetist and composer originally from Caro, Michigan. Grace specializes in twentieth and twenty-first century clarinet repertoire, especially pieces involving electronics and extended techniques. She enjoys free improvisation and creating clarinet based electronic music sound worlds based on her recorded improvisations. Grace also composes music for solo clarinet that focuses on exploring the vast sonic possibilities that the clarinet has to offer, especially through experimentation with multiphonics. Grace received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Performance and Chemistry from Albion College in Albion, Michigan in 2017. Grace received a Master of Music in Performance from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in 2021. She is currently pursuing a D.M.A. in Contemporary Performance at UC San Diego.

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