

YING WANG

Ying Wang is a Berlin-based composer. Frequency, pulse, noise, instrumental bodies, electronic residues and moving image are not effects in her work, but materials through which musical time and space are constructed. Rather than illustrating the present, her music allows speed, pressure, technology and historical memory to alter the behaviour of sound itself: stable systems accelerate, fracture and shift until their concealed emotional and political structures become audible. Working across large orchestra, music theatre, electronics and intermedia, Wang combines command of orchestral mass with an exacting interest in the unstable relations between body, machine, voice and image. Major works include 528 Hz, RE:WILDING and the fifty-minute music-theatre work Lorry 39. Her music has been performed by the SWR Symphony Orchestra, DSO Berlin, ORF RSO Wien, Ensemble Modern and Klangforum Wien. Her portrait albums TUN·TU and RE:WILDING were released by WERGO and KAIROS.

Rather than illustrating political or social realities, Wang allows them to reshape musical time, instrumental behaviour and collective listening. Systems accelerate, identities split, repetition turns obsessive, and familiar images become estranged.

A distinctive feature of Wang's music is the way abstract systems become corporeal. Driving pulses, unstable repetitions and overloaded instrumental gestures place performers and listeners inside rapidly shifting states. Orchestral sound is frequently infiltrated by Minimoog, electric bass, electric guitar, sampled voices and electronic residues, until distinctions between acoustic body, machine and mediated image begin to dissolve.

Wang often begins with an apparently stable and recognisable object - a frequency, a machine, a commodity, a myth or a voice - and places it under pressure until its concealed political and emotional structures become audible. In 528 Hz, an ostensibly healing frequency is exposed to orchestral mass, distortion and ideological ambiguity. RE:WILDING confronts the artificial desire to reconstruct nature through orchestra, electric bass and video.

The fifty-minute music-theatre work Lorry 39, premiered at Theater Freiburg, approaches the deaths of thirty-nine Vietnamese migrants through fractured voices, electronics and media images, while questioning the unstable boundary between witnessing and aesthetic representation. In the ongoing American Gods series, mythological figures encounter contemporary technologies and consumer icons. These collisions form compact laboratories in which desire, beauty, speed, power and technological belief are tested through instrumental bodies.

Her recent projects extend this enquiry into notation itself. Scores become maps, mirrored bodies or unstable fields through which performers continually renegotiate coordination, resonance and collective attention. In UNSTABLE FIELD, a Neural Mapping Notation is transferred directly onto four drumheads, turning the score into both a visual object and a navigational system for collective listening.

Born in Shanghai in 1976, Wang grew up in close proximity to the consequences of political violence and artistic resistance. Her continuing dialogue with the work of her father, the Chinese composer Wang Xilin, engages with questions of historical rupture, memory and artistic independence. This history is not treated as testimony alone; it has sharpened her ear for the violence, fragility and instability concealed beneath apparently ordered structures. In 2026, an Ensemble Modern portrait concert brought three of her works into dialogue with Wang Xilin's Octet in a programme curated by Barbara Mittler.

Wang studied composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and continued her studies in Cologne with York Höller, Johannes Schöllhorn and Rebecca Saunders, alongside electronic composition with Michael Beil. She completed the International Ensemble Modern Academy programme in Frankfurt and the Cursus in Composition and Computer Music at IRCAM in Paris. Encounters with Helmut Lachenmann and Hans Zender were also formative to her artistic development.

Her music has been commissioned and presented by institutions including the SWR ECLAT Festival, Lucerne Festival, Philharmonie de Paris, Warsaw Autumn, Wien Modern, Acht Brücken, Deutschlandfunk, Theater Freiburg and the Bavarian State Opera. Performers include the SWR Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Ensemble Modern, Klangforum Wien, Quatuor Diotima and Ensemble Reflektor. Her orchestral work Unermüdlich strömend, nahezu transparent was recorded by the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien under Marin Alsop.

Her distinctions include the 70th Composition Prize of the City of Stuttgart, the Heidelberg Women Artists' Prize, the Irino Prize and the Giga-Hertz Production Prize. Residencies and fellowships include Villa Concordia in Bamberg, Civitella Ranieri, the German Academy Rome Casa Baldi, Schloss Wiepersdorf and Villa Aurora in Los Angeles.

Her portrait album RE:WILDING was released by KAIROS in 2025 and selected by two critics for FONO FORUM's annual recommendations. Wang has taught composition and electronic music in Shanghai and Mannheim and has given lectures and masterclasses at institutions including Stanford University, the University of California San Diego, Rice University and the University of North Texas. For her, teaching is not the transmission of a style, but a space in which artistic independence, critical thought and new forms of listening can emerge.

Across her catalogue, Wang treats composition as the design of situations rather than the production of autonomous sound objects. Rhythm becomes physical pressure; electronic media alter the apparent identity of acoustic instruments; and notation can operate as map, mirror or unstable field. Copyleft subjects the string quartet tradition to a chain of transformed quotations, questioning originality and appropriation in dialogue with Byung-Chul Han's concept of Shanzhai. SCHMUTZ concentrates virtuosity and friction around the solo violin, while NOISIFICATION stages a transgenerational double commission with Wang Xilin. These works reveal a practice able to move between orchestral mass, chamber precision and media-based dramaturgy without losing its unmistakable intensity.

Wang's public practice extends beyond the concert hall. Her music and artistic thought have been featured by Deutschlandfunk and SWR, and she has participated in discussions on cultural memory, migration, technology and artistic independence. She has served on international competition juries, including the Brandenburg Biennale and the Hangzhou Contemporary Music Festival's Artinno Award, and has worked with emerging composers and performers through teaching, lectures and masterclasses. This combination of large-scale artistic vision, technical command and sustained critical engagement makes her work especially suited to ambitious orchestral, theatrical and interdisciplinary commissions.

Current projects include Phantom Limbs for Wien Modern, the music-theatre work Waterfall for the Österreichisches Ensemble für Neue Musik, with performances planned in Salzburg and Berlin in 2027, and a new saxophone quartet for Kebyart and the Wittener Tage für neue Kammermusik.

Ying Wang lives in Berlin. Current as of August 2026.

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