

WEDNESDAY NOON HOURS

ECKHARDT-GRAMATTÉ
NATIONAL COMPETITION
2025 WINNER'S TOUR

Linda Ruan, piano

Wednesday, October 29, 2025
Roy Barnett Recital Hall, UBC



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
School of Music

The 48th Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition in Piano

On April 26 and 27, 2025, five emerging pianists captivated audiences with electrifying performances at the 48th Eckhardt-Gramatté National Music Competition in Piano (E-Gré). Since its founding in 1976, the E-Gré Competition has served as an annual showcase for Canadian contemporary music excellence.

Taking top honours was UBC Music student, Linda Ruan (DMPs), whose artistry and command of the keyboard earned her First Prize. She is currently on a thrilling cross-Canada concert tour throughout October and November 2025, bringing her award-winning talent to audiences nationwide.

Linda Ruan also received the City of Brandon Prize for the Best Performance of the 2025 commissioned work, *where poppies still bloom and fall* by acclaimed composer Rita Ueda—a poignant and powerful piece.

We are thrilled to co-present this stop in Linda's Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition 2025 Winner's Tour.

The E-Gré Competition for the performance of Canadian and contemporary music is a memorial to composer, pianist, and violinist S.C. (Sonia) Eckhardt-Gramatté, who spent the last twenty-one years of her life in Manitoba. It fulfills her lifelong dream of creating a means by which the music of contemporary composers could make its presence felt by young musicians on the threshold of their careers. The E-Gré National Music Competition has been held annually since 1976 at Brandon University.

To learn more visit, e-gre.ca.



*The E-Gré Competition acknowledges the support of the
Canada Council for the Arts.*

Le Concours E-Gré remercie le Conseil des arts du Canada de son soutien.



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Program

Eckhardt-Gramatté National Competition
2025 Winner's Tour

Linda Ruan *piano*

Mirage (1997, rev. 2022)

Elisenda Fabregas
(b. 1955)

Aeon (2012)

I. Melting Clock
II. Rapid Meditation

Alice Ping Yee Ho
(b. 1960)

where poppies still bloom and fall (2024)

I. Voices in the Wind
II. Lark
III. Phoenix
IV. Dove (Dona Nobis Pacem)

Rita Ueda
(b. 1984)

Glass Houses No. 5 (1981)

Ann Southam
(1937-2010)

Etude No. 13: L'escalier du diable
(The Devil's Staircase) (1988-94)

György Ligeti
(1923-2006)

J6ker (2021)

Vincent Ho
(b. 1976)

*We invite you to be present and turn off your phones.
Photography and recording are not permitted.*

We are gathered together for this event on the ancestral territory of the
hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm̓-speaking Musqueam peoples.



Linda Ruan, piano

Winner of the 2025 Eckhardt-Grammatté National Music Competition, Chinese-Canadian pianist Linda Ruan is passionate about sharing the potential of music to overcome boundaries across cultures. Since being introduced to the drums at age four and then the piano at age seven, music has remained a stabilizing force in her diverse childhood from Tokyo, Shanghai, to Vancouver. Her unconventional path from a young age broadened her horizons and cultivated a fascination for diverse cultures. Her curiosity guided her beyond her solo piano studies, expanding to music pedagogy, community engagement and a wide range of chamber music projects.

Linda is a top prize winner in competitions including the Lancaster International Piano Competition, the Shean Piano and Strings Competition, and the Seattle International Piano Competition. She has performed in venues worldwide, from Carnegie's Weill Hall and Lincoln Center's Rose Studio to a recital tour in China spanning Guangzhou to Shanghai. Her piano duo La Fiammata is the second-prizewinner of the ARD International Music Competition 2021 and embarked on a Pan-Canadian Tour during the 2024-2025 season, a collaborative project between Atlantic Debut, Jeunesses Musicales Canada and Prairie Debut.

Linda received her Bachelor of Music with Honours and Master of Music degrees from The Glenn Gould School, The Juilliard School, and the Tianjin Juilliard School, respectively. Her past teachers include James Anagnoson, Hung-Kuan Chen, Corey Hamm, Xiao Li, Li Wang, and Xiaohan Wang. Currently, she is studying at the UBC School of Music with Dr. Corey Hamm.

Visit www.lindaruan.com, www.instagram.com/lindaruanpiano to connect with Linda online.

Program Notes

I envisioned this program in three parts. The first pair of pieces takes us through a journey in Spanish culture. First, aurally, through the shimmering re-imagining of Spanish harmonies and rhythms in the music of Elisenda Fabregas, then visually, through Alice Ping Yee Ho's *Aeon* - inspired by Spanish painter Salvador Dali's painting. The second pair of pieces explores themes of war, destruction, hope and peace through speaking piano and minimalism. The final set of two pieces features the relentless drive in Ligeti's etude *Devil's Staircase* and an erratic, crazy caricature of the Joker in Vincent Ho's *J6ker*.
~ Linda Ruan

Mirage (1997, rev. 2022) by Elisenda Fabregas (b. 1955)

The subtitle of *Mirage* originates from a fragment of one of the composer's own poems, setting a shimmering mood for the piece: "...I felt myself floating in a vast and magic space among tingling and shining stars...". While *Mirage* may evoke vivid images, it's primarily an abstract work, exploring emotional states through shifting tension, relaxation, mood, and tempo.

This 'colourful' piece requires a wide range of touch and a fluid, sparkling technique. It also demands a sense of drama and a clear sense of line to highlight its forward-looking energy. *Mirage* begins with a tension-building theme, which relaxes into a slow, lyrical second section, then rises again to a climactic peak before returning to a tranquil conclusion. It was commissioned for the 1997 San Antonio International Piano Competition in memory of Andrew Russell Gurwitz and premiered there by Roger Wright. The New York premiere was given by Mi-Jung Im at Merkin Hall in 1998.

Aeon (2012) by Alice Ping Yee Ho* (b. 1960)

Inspired by Salvador Dali's surrealist artwork *The Persistence of Memory*, *Aeon* explores the fluidity and relativity of time through two evocative movements: "Melting Clock" and "Rapid Meditation". The title *Aeon* refers to an aspect of time—a concept reflected in the dreamlike imagery of soft melting pocket watches. These symbols challenge our perception of fixed cosmic orders.

Musically, *Aeon* builds on layered motives. The first section features slow, flowing vertical clusters, which then break into swift, horizontal chromatic passages in the second. The "Meditative" character emerges through fragments of rapid piano figures, sometimes juxtaposed in different registers, creating a shifting, dreamlike atmosphere.

where poppies still bloom and fall (2024) by Rita Ueda* (b. 1984)

As the commissioned work for the 48th Eckhardt-Grammatté Competition, Rita Ueda's piece reflects on the resilience of poppies that thrive on former battlefields—a symbol of memory and loss. She writes:

“Poppies return year after year to remind us of the human cost of war.”

The music evokes images of ghostly soldiers returning in spring, a lark flying until exhausted, a phoenix repeatedly waking to the flames of her own destruction, and a dove unable to find peace. Despite over a century since the war to end all wars, these symbols continue to bloom, reminding us of ongoing conflicts and the hope for peace. The piece is a highly collaborative effort between the performer and the composer in the form of a structured improvisation, with words that can be spoken as the performer feels appropriate to the message of the piece.

Glass Houses No. 5 (1981) by Ann Southam (1937–2010)

Ann Southam described *Glass Houses* as her “happy hunt for middle C.” Composed in 1981 and later revised in 2009, this piece exemplifies minimalism, inspired by East Coast fiddle tunes and the work of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. The music features repeated patterns, or ‘ostinatos,’ with complex layers of melodic motifs—an intricate, adventurous journey for the pianist.

Southam's trust in the performer's musical judgment makes *Glass Houses* a deeply personal and intense challenge. The music's weaving motifs reflect patience and repetitive beauty—echoes of traditional work, unexpectedly requiring virtuosity and stamina.

Etude No. 13: L'escalier du diable (The Devil's Staircase) (1988–94) by György Ligeti (1923–2006)

Ligeti's *L'escalier du diable* references the “devil's staircase,” both a mathematical concept and visual metaphor of endless ascent—like M.C. Escher's staircases. The piece features relentless, ascending material—rapid repetitions, wide leaps, and extreme dynamics—creating a thrilling, powerful experience. Its technical demands challenge even the most accomplished performers, embodying the idea of an endless, possibly futile, climb.

J6ker (2021) by Vincent Ho* (b. 1976)

Inspired by six supervillains from comic books, *J6ker* incorporates theatrical elements into the piano performance. Ho collaborated with choreographers to translate the physical gestures of these comic book characters into gestures at the piano. *J6ker* is devilishly playful, erratic and provides several opportunities for improvisation from the performer, both musically and theatrically. Also within, there are musical quotes from Entrance of the Gladiators, Chopsticks and several bars of tranquil waltz before Ho interrupts or warps them into something else wildly fantastical. This étude explores the entire physical and expressive range of the piano and will test the technical abilities of any pianist.

Coming up at the UBC School of Music

Halloween Organ Spooktacular

Oct. 31, 2025 | 12:00pm, Barnett Hall

Free admission

UBC Symphony Orchestra

Nov 8, 2025 | 7:30pm, Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

UBC Strings Faculty Concert: Dvořák & more!

Nov. 16, 2025 | 3:00pm, Barnett Hall

Free admission

UBC Composers Concert

Nov. 17, 2025 | 12:00pm, Barnett Hall

Free admission

Wednesday Noon Hours:

Daniel Moody, countertenor & guests

Nov. 19, 2025 | 12:00pm, Barnett Hall

UBC Bands

Nov 19, 2025 | 7:30pm, Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

UBC Opera: Die Zauberflöte (The Magic Flute)

Nov 27-29, 7:30pm & Nov 30, 2:00pm | Old Auditorium

UBC Choirs & UBC Symphony Orchestra

Dec 6, 2025 | 7:30pm, Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

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