

## **Yuensuo Yang: *Ripening* (那些年) for Bb Clarinet and Piano (U.S. Premiere)**

Yuensuo Yang is an accomplished clarinetist, composer, and dedicated music educator. He currently serves as the Executive Director of Chiasong Ensemble, and one of the Curators at Cloud Gate and the New Convergence Foundation.

From 2000 to 2024, he has accumulated extensive experience in large-scale productions and orchestra performances, with over 1,000 events. His portfolio also includes 400 chamber music performances in various formats, 40 solo recitals, 54 concerto performances, 70 lectures, 51 campus tour performances, participation in 15 album recordings, 28 original compositions, and 33 arrangements, with ongoing contributions.

Adapted from Clarinet Quartet No. 1 – *Ripening*, this piece was composed in 2018 as a tribute to the cherished members of Taiwan’s Magic Clarinet Quartet. It playfully weaves together memories from the composer’s formative years (2008–2011), when, as an overseas student, he had the privilege of joining Magic Clarinet and representing Taiwan at various international music festivals. The solo version is being performed for the first time in the USA.

### 1. Fugue-ish Party (跑趴賦格)

The title of the first movement is “Fugue-ish Party.” From a purely theoretical perspective, it isn’t a traditional fugue at all—at most, it features a series of motives that continually reappear through imitation. However, as program music, forcing the “party” concept into a rigid, conventional form would dilute its singular, festive character. Instead, the use of imitation here unfolds in an unrestrained, unpredictable manner.

Much like the exposition in a sonata form, this movement introduces two themes. The first theme immediately serves as the motivic material for imitation. Once the second theme appears, its development—echoing the vibe of 90’s nightclub music—opts for a constantly flipping approach in place of the usual, never-ending key modulations. Then, in the recapitulation, the original second theme re-emerges without any transitional melody, subtly concealed amid chaos and contradiction.

### 2. Warm Quiet Chamber (逛書店)

The second movement, officially titled “Warm Quiet Chamber” in English but evocatively known in Mandarin as “Browsing a bookstore,” is a slow movement fashioned in a theme-and-variations format reminiscent of early Classical era slow

movements. A simple, unbroken phrase meanders through each voice—as if you're leisurely wandering through a cozy bookstore.

The metaphor of “browsing a bookstore” remains a well-guarded secret among a select few in musical circles, with the composer opting to leave its true meaning to your imagination. With each repetition, the accompaniment layers on complexity in a maximalist fashion—think of it as discovering an unexpected, quirky gem on every shelf. In the end, the variations resolve on a traditional chord, gently returning to the opening state and staying true to G minor.

### 3. Bad Habits (擇友)

In a sonata, the third movement is typically either a waltz or a scherzo; here, it's clearly the latter—a fast, triple-meter scherzo. The English title "Bad Habits" hints at mischievous tendencies, while the Mandarin "擇友" (Choosing Friends) suggests a more discerning selection. From the very outset, a sly, playful vibe emerges—subtle yet laced with humor. A touch of blues eases the tension, conjuring an image of a bold yet tentative youth who, when the moment is exposed, scatters in a delightful, chaotic rush.

### 4. Options (選擇題)

The academic journey has reached its final chapter—graduation is here, yet the passion for music has all but faded. Should one continue studying, give up, or dive into the world beyond? At just 24, the graduate is left with uneasy indecision. In this movement, "Options," the first theme repeats in an improvisatory style, suggesting that whichever path is taken, it's bound to be bumpy—and eventually, you circle back to the start. With a mix of funk and Latin flavors, the composer throws in rapid, spirited improvisations to depict a no-win scenario. The result is a movement that's exuberant and passionately unrestrained, though its energy feels at odds with the inner conflict its title hints at.