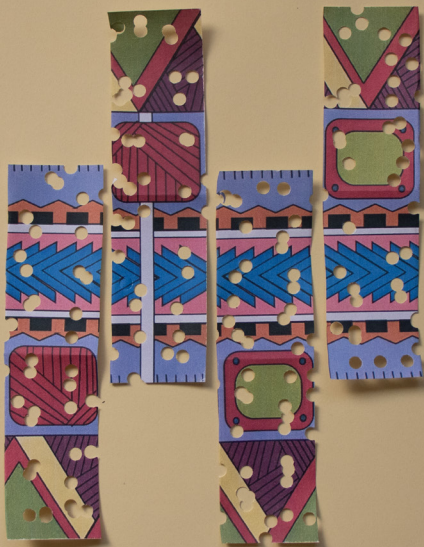




cantata (re)mixed for four hands



Cantata (re)mixed for four hands
Original works by J. S. Bach
arranged/composed by Chiahu Lee & György Kurtág
performed by Duo Vershinina/Lee

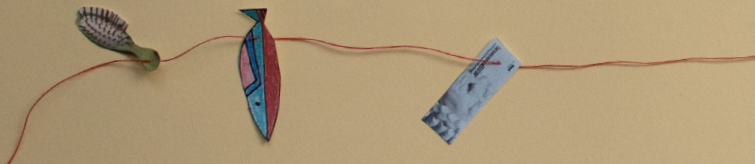
1.	Sinfonia <i>"Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir"</i> (BWV 29) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	3:56
2.	Chorale <i>"Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme"</i> (BWV 140) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	4:56
3.	Chorale Prelude <i>"Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein"</i> (BWV 734) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	1:41
4.	Chorale Prelude <i>"Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ"</i> (BWV 639) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	2:23
5.	Sonatina <i>"Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit"</i> (BWV 106) J. S. Bach / György Kurtág	2:19
6.	Aria <i>"Alles, was von Gott geboren"</i> (BWV 80) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	4:16
7.	Final Chorale <i>"Alle Menschen müssen sterben"</i> (BWV 262) J. S. Bach / Chiahua Lee	3:43
	<i>Total playing time 23:18</i>	

Some pieces are chosen carefully; others seem to choose us. This has often been the case in my musical life with Yulia. Our collaboration began almost by chance, with the discovery of Rheinberger's arrangement of Bach's *Goldberg Variations for two pianos* — a project that became not only the beginning of our musical partnership but, in retrospect, a door to endless possibilities.

One of those possibilities eventually led to our first album, *(ré)inventions à deux pianos*. In creating that project, I began to question some of the boundaries we had come to take for granted as classically trained musicians. With Yulia's encouragement, I found the courage to take a leap of faith and follow my own creative voice.

Almost ten years ago, when Yulia discovered Kurtág's transcription of the Sonatina from Bach's cantata *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*, we immediately knew it was a piece we wanted to play together. We were drawn to it by its intimacy, but we just did not yet know how to programme it. Once again, a seed was planted.

There is so much of Bach's non-keyboard music that I have always loved, but had never imagined I could truly inhabit as a pianist. Yet Bach himself was a master of transcription: he arranged music by other composers and reworked his own. Seen in that light, the desire to carry Bach's vocal worlds into the hands of pianists felt less like an intrusion and more of a continuation — a way of entering a tradition rather than stepping outside of it.



cantata (re)mixed for four hands grows out of that lineage. Kurtág's long-awaited Sonatina sits alongside six new four-hand reimaginings — among them music Bach once reworked himself — to form an imagined cantata of our own: a sequence shaped by memory, affinity, and the desire to bring Bach's vocal world into the shared space of one piano.

But the project was not born only from an idea. It was also born from *Sehnsucht*: from longing for the particular world we enter when we play together. Since our last recording, our lives have taken us further apart geographically. To rehearse, record, and simply meet at the same instrument has become more complicated than before. The move from two pianos to four hands was partly practical. Living in different cities, and depending on the availability of two pianos, made the logistics of rehearsing and performing increasingly difficult.

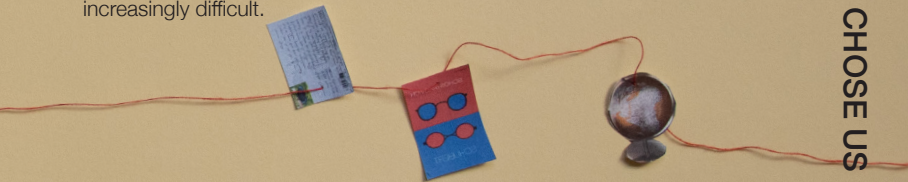
But it also changes the nature of the music-making itself. At one piano, every gesture becomes shared. The arrangements are interdependent, almost choreographed: hands cross, withdraw, make space, and breathe together. It is the kind of intimacy that first drew us to Kurtág's arrangement.

In that closeness, I am reminded again of the musical safe space Yulia creates — a space in which risk, tenderness, and reinvention can exist.

cantata (re)mixed for four hands is therefore not only a project of reimagining Bach, nor simply a transcription project. It is an ode to our partnership, held together across distance by friendship, trust, and the continuing desire to make music together.

Chia-Chia

THE PIECE THAT CHOSE US



Both the **Sinfonia** and the chorale **Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme** contain a small touch of (re)invention. In arranging the *Sinfonia*, I found myself thinking of the layered textures of electronic music — the way an ostinato can create both pulse and atmosphere. A brief quotation from one of my favourite Radiohead songs, *Everything in Its Right Place*, appears as a discreet reminder that my musical ideas often come from a melting pot of influences.

In the chorale prelude **Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein**, the challenge was to translate the sense of different instrumental colours into one shared keyboard. I was particularly inspired by the organ registration in Peter Hurford's recording. At the piano, this became a question of voicing and choreography: how different hands, registers, and parts could combine to suggest separate lines and colours, while still breathing as one body. This was perhaps one of the trickiest arrangements to choreograph. So much of listening at the piano is tied to one's own hands; here, the challenge was to listen through someone else's hands as well.

The chorale prelude **Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ**, was inspired in part by Kurtág's transcription style: intimate, spare, and intensely concentrated. I was interested in the fragility of thinly overlaid voices, especially in the primo part, where slight doublings and delicate resonances can change the colour of a line without disturbing its simplicity.

The **Aria** from Cantata BWV 80 belongs to a different kind of memory. It is a piece I have wanted to play since childhood, when I first discovered Bach's cantatas through the complete Hänssler edition. I remember listening through them sequentially, starting from BWV 1, until I stopped at BWV 80 — because I was listening to it on repeat. This arrangement grew out of that long-standing desire: to bring a beloved vocal moment into my own hands, and into the shared space of four hands.

The final chorale, **Alle Menschen müssen sterben**, was inspired by the resonance of string instruments, especially in Quatuor Arod's recording of their own arrangement. Translating that sound to the piano meant searching for ways to allow the

instrument to sing, decay, and vibrate; to suggest the continuity of bowed sound through touch, pedalling, and shared timing.

Chia-Chia

Our debut album (*réinventions à deux pianos*) felt like an experiment of which neither of us could quite predict the outcome. The fact that it exceeded every expectation we had gave us something even more valuable than recognition: it gave us permission. Permission to be even more authentic, direct, and vulnerable in the way we interpret the music and in the way we perform side by side.

Whenever I think of our collaboration with Chia-Chia words such as joy, bewilderment, spontaneity, trust, intimacy, and delicateness come to mind. And that's what this album embodies, with every piece exploring a different facet, a different combination of those qualities.

The album opens with a piece which always brings a smile to my face: a celebration of the exhilarating joy that playing music together can bring. Yet it is joy underpinned by trust, as this

music is often acrobatic in its demands and you cannot feel that freedom without truly having each other's back.

As the pieces on the album unfold, we move through different variations of playfulness, introspection, beauty, grief, exaltation, and bemusement at the delightfully unexpected. It was wonderful to witness how even in the formal, pressurised setting of a recording session, we could experience the magic and spontaneity that we so value in our playing together.

Performing these pieces with Chia-Chia, with their intimate four-hand nature, has brought me closer than ever to a feeling of loss of ego — a state where I felt so immersed in listening, that I couldn't tell which one of us produced this or that note, everything melting into one sound emerging from one instrument. The final piece on the album is the perfect expression of that. With the closing chords, it feels as if we have become one with the sound: listening to the vibrations of the instrument, not daring to breathe, long after the last note has faded into silence.

Yulia

Duo Vershinina/Lee

Pianists Yulia Vershinina-Mukhopadhyay and Chiahu 'Chia-Chia' Lee met at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where a lasting friendship grew into an enduring musical partnership. United by a shared curiosity for reinvention and lesser-known repertoire, the duo explores music across centuries through performance, arrangement, and creative reimagining, with projects ranging from Baroque reinventions to works by contemporary women composers. Their acclaimed CD *(ré)inventions à deux pianos* reinterprets Bach's two-part inventions with originality and elegance, praised by BBC Music Magazine as "an invigorating and beguiling spring clean for the ears." Supported by the Fonds stART-up Luxembourg, the recording reflects the duo's commitment to reimagining familiar repertoire through a contemporary lens. This season, the duo brings its repertoire to venues across the UK, Taiwan, and Luxembourg, including a recital at the Philharmonie Luxembourg.

Chia-Chia

Born in Luxembourg to Taiwanese roots, Chiahu "Chia-Chia" Lee was shaped by the loving and artistic presence of her mother. Growing up in a space of cultural in-betweenness, she developed an artistic voice drawn to ambiguity, transformation, and the spaces between established forms. A pianist, arranger, and musical creator, Chia-Chia was nurtured by classical music, yet never entirely at ease within its prescribed moulds. Through arrangement and recomposition, her creative practice has become a way of creating space from within the tradition itself.

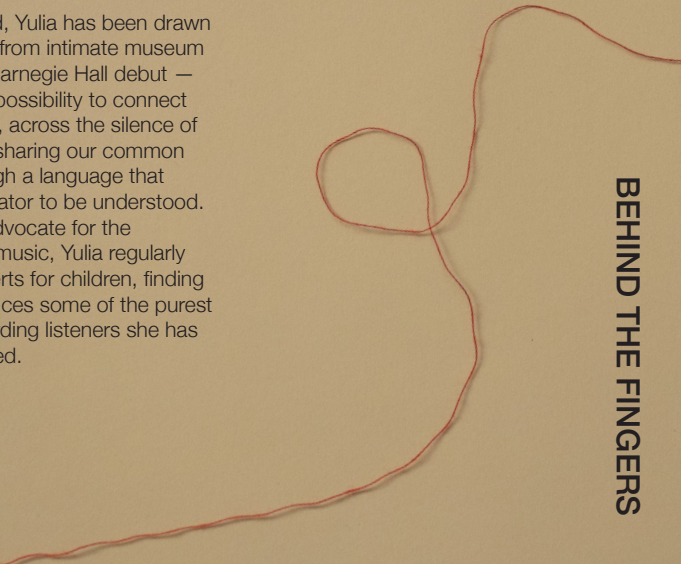
This artistic search is inseparable from a deep social conscience. Her past projects include *Medttness*, a UK tour devoted to lesser-known works by Nikolai Medtner; *Festreeval*, a charity festival connecting music composed in variation form with biodiversity; and *Goldberg by 32 Pianists* — a variation a day keeps the doctor away, a solidarity initiative launched during the worldwide lockdown.

Yulia

Yulia Vershinina-Mukhopadhyay was born in Russia, raised in Belgium, trained in Manchester, and taught in Luxembourg before making her home as a musician in London. A child of multiple cultures and musical traditions, she has always perceived music as a means of communication transcending borders and geography.

Since childhood, Yulia has been drawn to the stage — from intimate museum recitals to her Carnegie Hall debut — rejoicing in the possibility to connect with the listener, across the silence of the music hall, sharing our common humanity through a language that needs no translator to be understood. A passionate advocate for the accessibility of music, Yulia regularly performs concerts for children, finding in young audiences some of the purest and most rewarding listeners she has ever encountered.

In her teaching at the Junior Department of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and her mentoring work with professional musicians, Yulia is guided by the belief that every musician has a unique and irreplaceable voice worth nurturing, and that music belongs to everyone and anyone drawn to it.



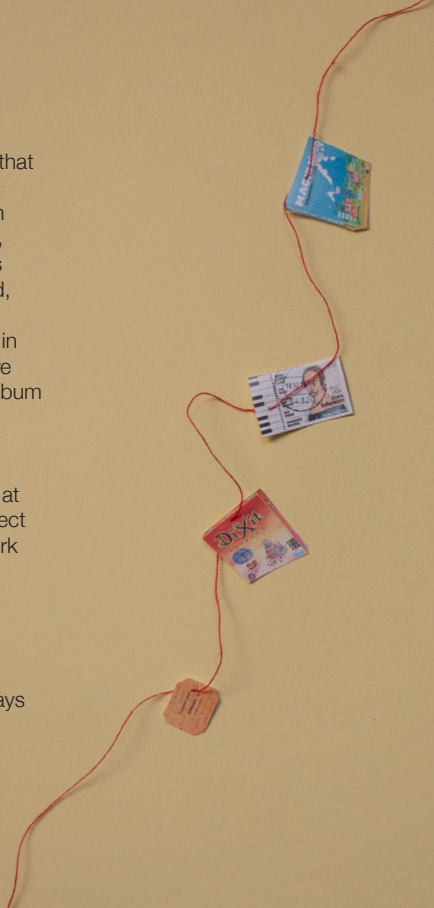
BEHIND THE FINGERS

BEHIND THE CURTAINS

We would like to thank our sound engineer, James, for his limitless patience, care, and expertise; our graphic designer, Ruth, for her ingenuity, sensitivity, and creativity that withstands any time pressure; our photographer and videographer on the recording day, Sarah and Jake, for capturing the joys and blunders of the day; and our polymath friend, Maya, whose photoshoot was not only infinitely fun, but also resulted in so many visual gems that they were bound to find their way onto this album cover.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to our label, Athene, and the whole team at First Inversion for bringing this project to those who already know our work and those just discovering it.

Last but not least, we are grateful to our families for their unwavering support allowing us to pursue our dreams, and to each other for always championing, challenging, and inspiring one another.



Yulia Vershinina-Mukhopadhyay, piano
Chiahu Lee, piano

Recorded at Studio 6, Royal Northern College of Music,
October 2025
Engineered by James Cardell-Oliver

Produced by Yulia Vershinina-Mukhopadhyay,
Chiahu Lee and James Cardell-Oliver

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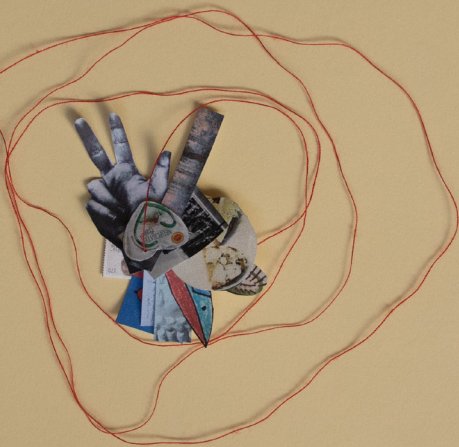
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