

# BOUND/UNBOUND

A L E X H O

S U N K E T I N G

*the encounter that never was*  
**2024**





*TANGRAM X LSO*

**9 & 10 August 2024**  
**LSO St Luke's**

***BOUND/UNBOUND***

the encounter that never was

Growing up with bound feet in the feudal Qing Dynasty, Afong Moy in 1834 became the first Chinese woman to be brought to America, where she was displayed before the public as a 'Chinese Curiosity'.

Half a century later, Qiu Jin, a young revolutionary, challenged the stifling Manchu culture and changed the fate of women by unbinding her feet and taking up the art of sword fighting. Poet, author of manifestos, and leader of a revolutionary community, Qiu Jin was determined to save her country from the corrupt Qing government.

These two women, bound and unbound, together compose a symphonic dance, a protest against the world of patriarchy into which they were born.

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**A NOTE FROM  
BOUND/UNBOUND'S CREATORS**

Welcome! Thank you for joining us for the premiere of Bound/Unbound. We are honoured to return to LSO St Luke's to breathe new life into the important stories of our two heroines, Afong Moy and Qiu Jin. Since Tangram's appointment as Associate Artists at LSO St Luke's in 2022, it has been a joy to work with this wonderful venue to explore its creative possibilities as a space for multidisciplinary productions. Tonight, we interweave Western opera, Chinese sword dance and installation to draw out dramatic and emotional arcs that speak as much to the issues confronting us today as those 200 years ago. Afong Moy and Qiu Jin lived through different circumstances in different decades, and yet their lives were shaped by similar binds of patriarchy and misogyny. In bringing together their stories, we highlight their shared struggle to survive and provoke questions about the intimate connections both historical and present between China and West.

Our deepest thanks are to our artistic and technical collaborators whose trust and skill have made Bound/Unbound possible.

*Alex Ho & Sun Keting*

# TANGRAM X LSO

*The performance includes a 20-minute interval*

## *PERFORMERS*

**Alex Ho** Conductor

**Haegee Lee** soprano

**CHEN Yining** dancer

**Beibei Wang** percussion

## *LSO MUSICIANS*

**Harriet Rayfield** violin

**German Clavijo** viola

**Amanda Truelove** cello

**Jani Pensola** double bass

**Anneke Hodnett** harp

## *CREDITS*

**Alex Ho** and **SUN Keting** directors

**Alex Ho** and **SUN Keting** composers

**CHEN Yining** choreographer

**MENG Chang** and **PENG Ke** visual designers

**SUN Keting** voiceover and sound design

**Xiaolu Guo**, **Alex Ho** and **SUN Keting** Writers

**Yilin Wang Qiu Jin** translator and consultant

**Joshua Hickin** music and sound editor

**Jon Walmsley** audio mixer

Based on an original script by **Xiaolu Guo**

*Co-produced by*

*Tangram and the LSO with generous support*

*from the Bagri Foundation and Arts Council England*

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# TANGRAM X LSO

**Act 1:** Girlhood and Domesticity

**Act 2:** Exhibition and Marriage/Tokyo  
Interval

**Act 3:** Bound/Unbound

**Act 4:** Manifesto

*TRANSLATIONS FROM CANTONESE/CHINESE*

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**Act 1:**

爸爸 唔好叫我走啦

Father! Please don't send me away!

**Act 2:**

**满江红·小住京华**

秋瑾

小住京华，早又是、中秋佳节。  
为篱下、黄花开遍，秋容如拭。  
四面歌残终破楚，八年风味徒思浙。  
苦将侬、强派作蛾眉，殊未屑!

身不得，男儿列；  
心却比，男儿烈！  
算平生肝胆，因人常热。  
俗子胸襟谁识我？英雄末路当磨折。  
莽红尘、何处觅知音？青衫湿!

**A River of Crimson: A Brief Stay in the Glorious Capital**

By Qiu Jin, Translated by Yilin Wang

A brief stay in the glorious Capital,  
and soon, it's Mid-Autumn Festival again.  
Sheltering by the fence, chrysanthemums bloom  
everywhere;  
the autumn air cool and clear, as if freshly cleansed.  
The folk ballads of conquered lands fade in all four  
directions  
as the kingdom falls ultimately in defeat;<sup>2</sup>  
the aftertaste of these past eight years  
makes me long wistfully for Zhèjiāng.  
Bitterly forced to behave as a wife with painted brows,  
I'm full of disdain!

Not a man in the flesh,  
unable to walk amongst them;  
but the heart exceeds,  
more fierce than a man's!  
I think of my strong spirit,  
stirring often with passion on others' behalf.  
How can narrow, uncultivated minds  
comprehend my nature?  
A hero at the path's end  
must suffer trials and tribulations.  
In the crimson-dust world, where can I find my kindred  
spirit?  
My plain robe is stained with tears!

**勉女权歌 Feminist Anthem**

秋瑾 By Qiu Jin, Translated by Yilin Wang

吾辈爱自由，勉励自由一杯酒。  
男女平权天赋就，岂甘居牛后？  
愿奋然自拔，一洗从前羞耻垢。  
若安作同俦，恢复江山劳素手。

旧习最堪羞，女子竟同牛马偶。  
曙光新放文明侯，独立占头筹。  
愿奴隶根除，智识学问历练就。  
责任上肩头，国民女杰期无负。

We all long for freedom,  
let's drink to its pursuit!  
All genders born as equals,  
none in the ox's rear.  
Rise up, liberate,  
wash away the shameful past!  
Join hands, companions:  
we'll restore our homeland!

Old customs appall,  
women seen as cattle!  
A brighter era is dawning.  
Autonomy comes first.  
Root out enslavement,  
acquire wisdom and insight.  
Let's shoulder our duties.  
Heroines shall not disappoint!

**Act 3:**

***Song in Cantonese***

*By Xiaolu Guo*

孤獨到好似街邊嘅燈，寂寞到好似冇朋友嘅雀仔  
我仲可以返到屋企嗎？仲可以見到滿面風霜嘅爸爸  
媽媽嗎？

我仲可以當美國係屋企嗎？我好掛住佢哋，好想返  
屋企

'Lonely as a lamp in the street.

Lonely as a crane without a flock.

Will I ever travel back to my South China Sea?

And see my wrinkled parents again?

Can I make America my home?

I long for them, and long for home.'

**有怀(游日本时作)/Reflections(written during travels in  
Japan)**

秋瑾 By Qiu Jin, Translated by Yilin Wang

日月无光天地昏，沉沉女界有谁援？

钗环典质浮沧海，骨肉分离出玉门。

放足湔除千载毒，热心唤起百花魂。

可怜一幅鲛绡帕，半是血痕半泪痕！



## TANGRAM X LSO

Sun and moon without light. Sky and earth in darkness.

Who can lift up this drowning world of women?

I pawned my jewels to sail across the endless deep-blue sea,

torn from my offspring as I departed my homeland at Jade Gate Pass.

Unbinding my feet to cleanse away a millennium's poisons,

I awaken the spirits of women, hundreds of flowers, bloom.

Oh, this pitiful handkerchief made of merfolk-woven silk, half stained with blood and half soaked in tears!

### Act 4:

秋风秋雨愁煞人 by 陶澹人 Tao Zhenre

(Qiu Jin's last words, translated by Yilin Wang)

Autumn winds, autumn rain, the heart drowning in sorrows

## TANGRAM X LSO

**SUN Keting (Rockey)** is a China-born, London-based composer, creative director, and researcher. Her compositions focus on performing arts and instrumental sound exploration, combining Eastern cultural, spiritual and philosophical elements. The Independent described her as “the Future Way to Go” and praised her “harmonic imagination, mastery of instrumentation” by Bachtrack. Keting’s music has graced stages globally, with pieces performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Riot Ensemble, Ligeti Quartet and the BBC Singers. Notably, she composed for Birmingham Royal Ballet’s “Black Sabbath.” She holds bold and innovative artistic visions as an RPS Composer for 2023-2024 and co-director at Tangram. Having earned her B.A. from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and an MMus from the Royal Academy of Music, Keting is pursuing a doctorate at the Royal Academy of Music.

@rockeysunketing

**Alex Ho** is a British-Chinese composer whose music and stage works have been described as “menacing and poetic” (The Guardian) and “insidiously bold” (Opera Magazine). Winner of the UK Critics' Circle Young Artist Award 2021 for his “compelling and individual” works, Alex is a resident composer at Glyndebourne and was formerly Artist-in-Residence at Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier (2021-2024) and Associate Composer at Oxford International Song Festival (2022-2023). His music theatre ‘Untold’ was co-created with Olivier-nominated choreographer Julia Cheng and won the FEDORA Opera Prize 2023 for a “bold and moving creation”. Alex has had pieces performed/commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, BBC Radio 3, Royal Opera House, Het Concertgebouw, Music Theatre Wales, London Sinfonietta and National Youth Choirs of Great Britain. Alex graduated from Oxford and Cambridge universities and completed a doctorate at the Royal College of Music with a full AHRC scholarship.

@alexhocomposer

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## TANGRAM X LSO

**CHEN Yining** is from Beijing, China. She graduated from the Beijing Dance Academy with an undergraduate degree in Chinese Classical Dance. She received a postgraduate degree in Dance Practice and Performance from the University of Roehampton, where she won many awards in China and abroad. In 2018, she was invited by the world-renowned music artist Tan Dun to perform a solo dance - "Playing Pipa", in his composition Buddha Passion, which toured the world. In 2019, she played the leading role in the documentary The Great Poet Du Fu, jointly recorded by the BBC, UK, and CCTV, China. In August 2022, the performance piece 'Crying of Four Seasons' was presented at the Edinburgh Festival.

@陈奕宁

Born in South Korea, **Haegge Lee** trained at Seoul National University and the Conservatoire National de Région Pierre Barbizet, Marseille. She was a Jette Parker Young Artists Programme member at the Royal Opera House, where her roles included Frasquita Carmen, Sandman Hänsel und Gretel, Papagena Die Zauberflöte and Xenia Boris Godunov. Her broadcasts include The Dengineers: Opera House Den for CBBC. Her awards include First Prize in the Concours de Bach, Marseilles, and Second Prize in the first Korean Classical Singers Association International Vocal Competition, Seoul. She was also a Samling Artist singing Jonathan Dove's Man, Woman, Child with Malcolm Martineau at Marchmont House and gave a Crush Room Recital with Patrick Milne at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. For WNO she has sung Musetta La bohème, Gilda Rigoletto and Violetta La Traviata and Lauretta Gianni Schicchi. Other recent engagements include Tytania A Midsummer Night's Dream (Korean National Opera), title role Lakmé (Chelsea Opera Group) Queen Tye Akhnaten (ENO) and the 2023 Leeds Castle Classical Concert with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

@rabbit\_in\_london\_haegge

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With her background in both Classical and traditional Chinese percussion, **Beibei Wang** brings her characteristic “high energy virtuosity” (Wall Street Journal) to performances of diverse repertoire. As a soloist, she has performed around the world with orchestras such as BBC Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and has appeared as soloist on the world’s most prestigious stages. Her unique background in classical and world music styles brings her to a range of multi-disciplinary projects ranging from performances of contemporary classics and new commissions to international tours with dance productions. Beibei is a founding member of Tangram.

@beibeiwangpercussion

**Joshua Hickin** has become an established orchestrator and arranger since graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in 2019. His specific expertise in technology and transcription of music means he is in high demand. He has worked on productions for the Royal Ballet, Rambert Dance Company and most recently Birmingham Royal Ballet as an orchestrator and arranger for “Black Sabbath the Ballet”. His “Want Symphonic Overture”, arranged for Rufus Wainwright’s new orchestral tour, was performed at the BBC Proms and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. And his arrangement for Cory Wong’s album with the Metropole Orkest “Chateau” was recently released. Joshua enjoys regular collaboration with composers such as Joby Talbot and Bryce Dessner, songwriter and composer Rufus Wainwright and Tony Award winning orchestrator Christopher Austin.

@joshhickin

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## TANGRAM X LSO

**PENG Ke(PK)** is a multidisciplinary artist exploring the intersection of visual, sound, and motion. Ke's artistic practice encompasses a range of styles and mediums, from abstract motion graphics to audiovisual installations and performances. Her work has been shown at various international events, including V&A Museum(UK), The Centre Pompidou IRCAM Forum(FR), Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab(CN), Society of Arts and Technology(CA), IKLECTIK Artlab(UK), and Media Art Nexus (SG).

@pppunko

**MENG Chang**, a transdisciplinary artist and researcher, earned her bachelor's degree in Musicology and obtained an MA in Information Experience Design and an MFA in Arts and Humanities from the Royal College of Art. Her work transcends disciplinary and sensory boundaries, inhabiting a position close to ecofeminism to examine the exploitation of nature by humans and the dominant power dynamics between different positions. She uses experiential art practices as a medium for the long-term research and application of this theory, aiming to create a more inclusive and caring future. Collaboration plays a crucial role in her work. By establishing dynamic partnerships with professional groups such as scientists, musicians, choreographers, and movement artists, she combines their collective wisdom, creativity, and talents to conduct bold explorations and push boundaries. She excels at linking various art forms using an artist-led curatorial approach, diversifying and enriching her creations to foster innovation in the arts.

@littlesnowmeimei

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## TANGRAM X LSO

**Xiaolu Guo** is a novelist, memoirist and filmmaker. Her novels include *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, and *I Am China*. Her memoir *Once Upon A Time In The East* won the National Book Critics Circle Award 2017 and was shortlisted for the RSL Ondaatje Prize. *Radical* was published by Penguin 2023 and was followed by *My Battle of Hastings* in 2024, completing her autobiographical trilogy. Her recent novel *A Lover's Discourse* was shortlisted for the Goldsmiths Prize 2020. Named as a Granta's Best of Young British Novelist in 2013, she has also directed a dozen award-winning films, including *How Is Your Fish Today* (Sundance Official Selection) and *UFO In Her Eyes* (TIFF). Her feature *She, A Chinese* received the Golden Leopard Award at the Locarno Festival 2009. Her documentary *We Went to Wonderland* was in the Official Selection of ND/NF at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. *Once Upon A Time Proletarian* premiered at Venice Film Festival 2009. She had her film retrospectives at London's Whitechapel Gallery (2019), Cinematheque Switzerland (2011) and the Greek Film Archive (2018). Her next novel, a subversive reimagining of *Moby-Dick* entitled *Call Me Ishmaelle*, will be published by Penguin in March 2025. Guo is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

@xiaolu\_impressions

**Yilin Wang** (she/they) is a writer, a poet, and a Chinese-English translator. Her writing has appeared in *Clarkesworld*, *Fantasy Magazine*, *The Malahat Review*, *Grain*, *CV2*, *The Ex-Puritan*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Tyee*, *Words Without Borders*, and elsewhere. She is the editor and translator of *The Lantern and the Night Moths* (Invisible Publishing, 2024). Her translations have also appeared in *Room*, *Asymptote*, *Samovar*, *The Common*, *LA Review of Books'* "China Channel," and the anthology *The Way Spring Arrives and Other Stories* (TorDotCom 2022). She has won the Foster Poetry Prize, received an Honorable Mention in the poetry category of Canada's National Magazine Award, been longlisted for the CBC Poetry Prize, and been a finalist for an Aurora Award. Yilin has an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC and is a 2021 Clarion West Writers Workshop graduate.

@yilinwriter

\*Some of the translations are excerpted from *The Lantern and the Night Moths* (Invisible Publishing 2024), an anthology of translated Chinese poetry edited and translated by Yilin Wang.

# TANGRAM X LSO

*Tangram is a UK-based new music collective creating and curating ambitious, multidisciplinary, and culturally curious concerts and productions. Co-directed by Alex Ho and Rockey Sun Keting, they are Associate Artists at LSO St Luke's.*

*Described as “truly innovative” (RPS Young Artist 2023 nomination), Tangram revel in “powerfully theatrical, unexpected, refreshing” (TEMPO), “daring, cutting-edge, mesmerising” (Morning Star), and “highly imaginative presentations [of] truly limitless virtuosity” (I CARE IF YOU LISTEN). Their projects bring together composers, researchers, and performers of Chinese and Western instruments in collaboration with performance artists, dancers, visual designers and Chinese Opera performers to perform work that engages nuanced cultural dialogue between China and the West.*

*Since launching in 2019, Tangram have presented new commissions by Raymond Yiu, Vivian Fung, Tonia Ko, Jasmin Kent Rodgman and Ben Nobuto. They premiered Beibei Wang’s music theatre Wu Xing (2023), which toured to the Great Theatre of China in Shanghai, and Alex Ho’s music theatre Untold (2019), which went on to win the FEDORA Opera Prize 2023 presented at Opéra national de Paris. As Associate Ensemble at SOAS University of London, they hosted a symposium New CrEAtivities (2020) dedicated to East Asian music-making in the UK.*

*Tangram are grateful to the organisations and individuals who have supported their work including Arts Council England, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Bagri Foundation, Britten-Pears Arts, Countess of Munster Trust, Genesis Foundation, Help Musicians UK Jerwood Arts, PRS Foundation, and Sound and Music.*

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**work**

Peter Mycroft, Ben Rutt-Howard, Fern Wilson, Tamsyn  
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Chris Millard, Meg Holch, Dan Smith

to **Mike Skelton**

to **Josh Hickin and Jon Walmsley**

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## *UPCOMING LIVE EVENTS*

### **NATURE ECHO UK Tour**

**7 Nov** through the noise, London

**5 Feb** Nottingham Trent University

**20 Feb** Manchester University

**26 Feb** York University



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