The lecture presents a female German composer Ellinor Valesby, who composed Chinese art songs in Chinese with classical Chinese poetry. For political reasons, she used her pseudonym rather than her given name Irmgard Heinrich. As a Western composer, also the wife of Chinese poet and composer Ching-chu, who lived in China for 25 years, Valesby’s songs present various interpretive challenges stemming from the combination of traditional Chinese poetry, folk music vernacular, and Western music components. Because no documentation in English can be found about Valesby or her songs, there is a need to provide performers with a better understanding of her perspective in these increasingly multicultural times. In addition, the lecture briefly discusses the germination and development of the Chinese art song and introduces the school song, the predecessor of Chinese art songs. The focus is on examining the Chinese and Western influences that appear in Valesby’s art songs, revealing through examination of text setting, form, musical texture, and the role of piano how this female Western composer who did not speak Chinese set Chinese poetry from her unique cross-cultural perspectives. Today the legacy of these Chinese art song pioneers remains incomplete, but Valesby and her husband Ching-chu’s profound contribution to both Chinese art songs and Chinese musicology remains indisputable.

Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain's Pattering Trill (1930) Ellinor Valesby (1894–1969)
To My Joy Is This Very Night (1930)
Thought in a Tranquil Night (1930)
The Farewell to Yi River (1930)