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By Angelino's Coffee

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Composer Yang Bao premiering site-specific work 'Sol One' in Napa Valley

New York-based artist and composer Yang Bao comes to Napa to premiere his new work "Sol One" in an immersive soundscape. |



SLIDE 1 OF 5
Artist and composer Yang Bao will premiere his composition "Sol One" at Opus One Winery in Oakville on Nov. 8, 2023. The performance hosted by Festival Napa Valley and Opus One Winery is part of the California Festival, an initiative drawing awareness to up-and-coming musicians and composers. (Festival Napa Valley)

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THE PRESS DEMOCRAT
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Opus One Winery in Oakville will transform for an immersive sound experience Nov. 8 to premiere Yang Bao's site-specific composition, "Sol One," a work driven by his concept of "infinity music."

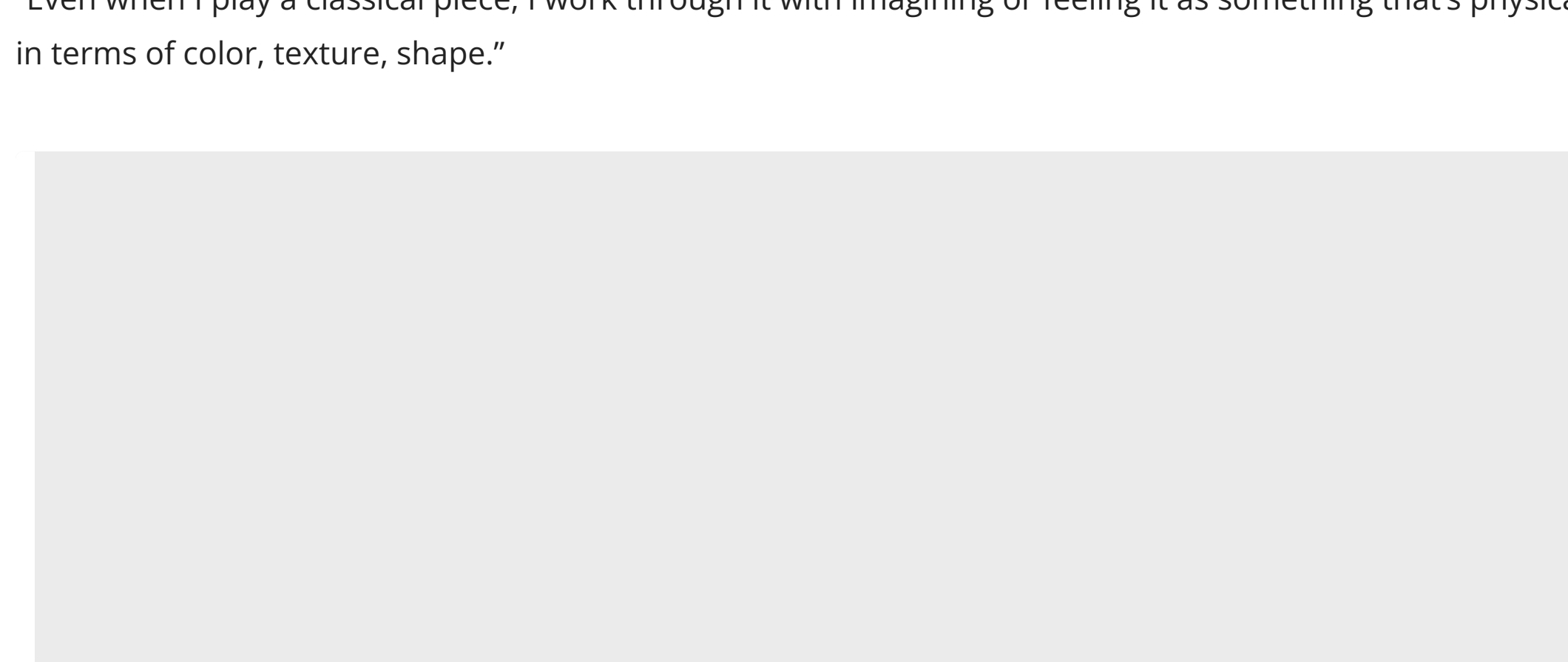
Hosted by Opus One and Festival Napa Valley, the premiere is part of a statewide music festival, California Festival: A Celebration of New Music.

The Nov. 3-19 festival is a musical initiative to showcase new artists through performances of works they've written in the last five years.

Bao is a cross-disciplinary composer, artist and pianist based in New York, classically trained in piano performance at The Juilliard School and New England Conservatory of Music.

The artist creates physical music, works that allow people to experience sound by using all of their senses. His concept of "infinity music" is demonstrated through sound with no beginning or end.

"I grew up as a classical pianist, and I always hoped to have something tangible after concerts," he said. "Even when I play a classical piece, I work through it with imagining or feeling it as something that's physical in terms of color, texture, shape."



Bao said he was inspired by the grand vineyards' beauty when visiting in June — and soon began composing.

The piece represents the changing climate and imagines a world in which humans relocate to Mars.

"Sol One" translates to "Martian Day One" and conveys what it feels like to land on another planet, Bao said.

"We are taken away from our home, and there's these feelings of excitement but also homesickness and fear in another planet," Bao said. "And in this imaginary world where earth is no longer habitable because of climate change, how are we perceiving the new world? What is climate change?"

Christopher Barefoot, vice president of communications and guest relations at Opus One, said the winery is a major supporter of the arts.

"Our founders Baron Philippe de Rothschild and Robert Mondavi were both very personally engaged and big supporters of the arts in general," Barefoot said.

A connection with arts and music has remained central to the company's ethos, and the winery recently increased programs around supporting music.

"In the sense that wine is a part of gracious living, food and art all combined to create what Mr. Mondavi used to call 'the good life,'" he said.

Opus One was a founding partner of Festival Napa Valley, and the two organizations joined this fall with California Festival to help showcase emerging artists.

Bao was Festival Napa Valley's 2023 Maria Manetti Shrem Daniel Brewbaker Composer Prizewinner; "Sol One" is a continuation of his previously awarded piece.

When visiting Opus One, Bao performed acoustical studies and took architectural drawings of the courtyard to anticipate optimal acoustics for background music at the premiere.

"I deeply admire his creativity, his passion. And I know he has the talent to create something really, truly unique. So I'm looking forward to it," Barefoot said.

A transparent tent will cover the Opus One courtyard, giving guests an impression of being outside. However, the walls may come down if the weather is nice, Barefoot said.

"The main idea is you're going to be in this encapsulated space that makes you feel like you're in open space in nature," Barefoot said. "And the piano will be in the center in the round, so guests will be seated on either side."

For the immersive sound experience, Bao will be accompanied by Festival Orchestra Napa led by Ming Luke.

The sound installation is part of a continuous practice for the artist, a concept of "infinity music" he describes as being able to experience music as a collective acoustic environment in infinite time.

"Where you are able to walk into this soundscape with no start, end or particular order but rather just like walking into a national park where you're able to experience multiple things. From the sky, the land, specific geological formations," he said. "We are able to experience a national park as a whole."

Bao said his composition is intended to morph infinitely, never repeating itself.

"It's meant to resemble the passing clouds, the variations of light, the wind, the temperature. So it's always changing," he said. "We will not live the exact same moment twice."

In addition to sound, Bao translates the concept of infinity music through the physical art of sculptures.

Bao's goal is to help others connect with their surroundings and draw awareness to the vast nonhuman aspects of earth. He hopes his work can get people in touch with nature and themselves.

"As human beings, we're always very aware that we're humans. But how does a plant feel? How does the soil feel? The wind? The birds?" he said. "How do we relate to our surroundings better? How do we feel from within ourselves?"

The "Sol One" premiere is sold out; learn more about the artist online at yangbaostudio.com.

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