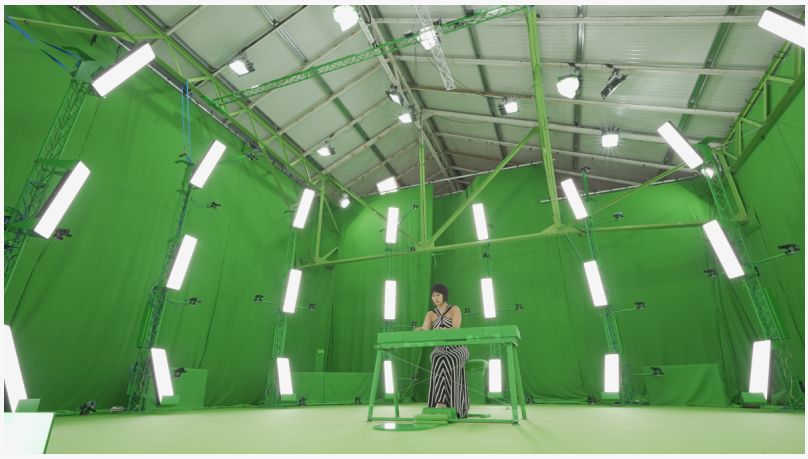
NOW OPEN: Mixed-Reality Installation Playing with Fire: An Immersive Odyssey with Yuja Wang at London's Southbank Centre

Blending live performance, storytelling, and technology, Playing with Fire offers unprecedented access to acclaimed pianist Yuja Wang



Behind the scenes of Playing with Fire: An Immersive Odyssey with Yuja Wang. Produced by VIVE Arts and Atlas V. Directed by Pierre-Alain Giraud.

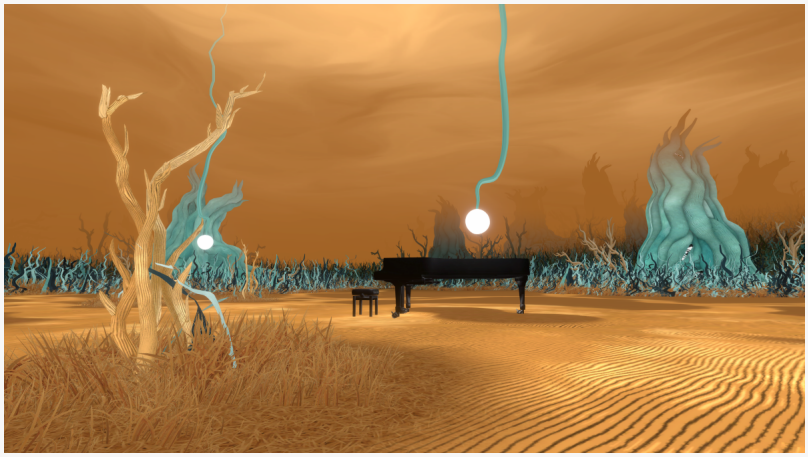


Image from Playing with Fire produced by VIVE Arts and Atlas V.

LONDON, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, September 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Playing with Fire: An Immersive Odyssey with Yuja Wang, the pioneering immersive installation that boldly reimagines the classical concert experience, is now open at Southbank Centre until 3 January 2027. This innovative combination of live piano recital, visual art, mixed reality and virtual reality technologies, and spatialised sound pushes the boundaries of musical performance by offering a new lens to experience the artistry of pianist Yuja Wang. These elements conjure a fascinating dialogue between the physical and virtual realms that explores the relationship between sound and image, as well as the interplay between music, poetry, and art. The multi-user, location-based experience premiered in November 2025 at Musée de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris, traveled to Cannes Immersive and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and will be on view at the National Theater and Concert Hall in Taipei from October 10-24, 2026, and Lincoln Center in NYC from January 30-February 21, 2027.

Playing with Fire demonstrates the power of immersive mediums to enable new kinds of

interactive, multisensory experiences for audiences to share collectively. Written and directed by acclaimed film and immersive director Pierre-Alain Giraud (winner of the Best Immersive Work Award at Cannes 2024), the project is produced by VIVE Arts, the global arts and technology initiative that supports artistic experimentation with nascent technologies, and Atlas V, award-winning immersive and narrative-driven production company, in collaboration with production partner Lightroom, a London-based home for spectacular immersive shows from the world's leading creative minds.

To bring the project to life, Yuja Wang collaborated with an artistic team including Pierre-Alain Giraud and Icelandic visual artist Gabríela Friðriksdóttir—longtime creative partners whose joint work has been presented at the Venice Biennale, Lyon Biennale and Frieze Art Fair—as well as Academy Award-winning sound designer Nicolas Becker. The experience was created using 360-degree volumetric video capture and recordings of Yuja's playing and voice, combined with advanced spatial audio, surrealistic animated visuals, and the cutting edge of immersive technologies using VIVE Focus Vision headsets.

About the Experience
Playing with Fire introduces audiences to an intimate virtual performance by Yuja Wang, to witness the physical and mental act of performance through repertoire personally selected by Yuja, ranging from Bach to Stravinsky, accompanied by the transformative images and musical worlds conjured by Yuja's playing. At the center of the space, both real and virtual, is a Steinway & Sons Spirio concert grand piano which recreates Yuja's virtuosity on the physical instrument in real time, synchronised with the holographic fingers of her virtual self.

Seamlessly shifting between mixed reality and virtual reality depending on the participants' positions and different phases of the experience, Playing with Fire offers viewers unprecedented closeness to the musical performance. Audience members can move freely throughout the space, observing Yuja's gestures, concentration and the way music comes to life under her fingers. Throughout the gallery, Murano glass "light bulbs" designed by the acclaimed lighting designer Philippe Berthome are physically suspended and recreated in the virtual experience. As participants move closer to the piano and to the bulbs, they enter an audio zone where they can hear fragments of poetry connected with the repertoire.

The repertoire and accompanying visual landscape of Playing with Fire explore the many facets of fire as the spark of human imagination, showcasing the expression of creativity through art and the power of music to capture the essence of the human experience.

Through her musical choices, audiences discover Yuja's evolution as an artist and her intimate relationship with music. From childhood memories to her deep connection with composers like Chopin, each piece becomes a window into Yuja's world, and her path from a young pianist in China to a world-renowned virtuoso becomes a reflection of the universal quest for artistic excellence. As she plays, Yuja invites audiences into her mind, allowing them to experience music not merely as passive listeners but as active participants in her creative process.

Book tickets: https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/playing-with-fire/book/

About Yuja Wang
Pianist Yuja Wang is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty and captivating stage presence. She has performed with the world's most venerated conductors, musicians and ensembles, and is renowned not only for her virtuosity, but her spontaneous and lively performances, famously telling the New York Times "I firmly believe every program should have its own life, and be a representation of how I feel at the moment."

Yuja Wang's recordings have garnered multiple awards, including five Grammy nominations and her first Grammy win for Best Classical Instrumental Solo with her 2023 release of "The American Project." For this she also won an Opus Klassik award in the Concerto category.

About VIVE Arts
VIVE Arts (HTC) is a global arts and technology initiative redefining how culture is created, experienced, and preserved through the power of digital mediums. VIVE Arts commissions, produces, and distributes groundbreaking immersive experiences in partnership with world-class artists and institutions—expanding creative possibilities for artists and enabling institutions to animate cultural heritage in bold new ways that reach wider audiences. With unmatched expertise in the arts, culture, and technology, VIVE Arts empowers artists and institutions to harness immersive arts and technologies. This
opens new modes of storytelling, experimentation, and exhibition and fosters a dynamic ecology for digital innovation in the arts, from creation through to distribution. Since its founding in 2017, VIVE Arts has realized more than 75 projects worldwide and stands at the forefront of advancing culture through technology.

Produced by VIVE Arts and Atlas V, in collaboration with production partner Lightroom
Creative team: Yuja Wang, performer; Pierre-Alain Giraud, writer, director & creative director; Gabríela Friðriksdóttir, creative director & original artwork; Arthur Maugendre, art director; Nicolas Becker & Antoine Martin, sound designers; Sylvain Hayot, lead developer; Laurence Fontaine, scenographer; Philippe Berthomé, lighting designer
Technical team: Studio Albyon Supported by Steinway & Sons
With support from the CNC (Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée), and Pictanovo

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