

Irene Hsu Memorial Program of Speakers

October 7, 2023

Speaker	Relationship to Irene	Topic
Ken Iisaka	Friend of Eugene and Kerri	Pianist performing Sinding's Rustle of Spring
Jay Hsu	Husband	Music as their mythos
Wyman Chu	Younger Brother	Immigration and early years of the Chu family
Helen Benham	Piano Teacher, Colleague, Friend	Journey of teacher and student, from accomplishment to life friendship
Mai Hsu	Sister-In-Law, Sister of Jay Hsu	Friendship bonded by war, immigration, culture, and Irene as connector
Blanche Chien	Holmdel Bell Labs Crew Friend	Love of creation, creativity, and all things beautiful
Angela An	Student, Mentee, Peer, Friend	Irene's student and transition to friendship
Kerri Hsu	Daughter-In-Law, Wife of Eugene	Perceptions from the newest relative
Eugene Hsu	Son of Irene and Jay Hsu	Irene's dramatic last moments
Drew Shih	Pastor, Friend of Eugene Hsu	Theological perspective, scripture, prayer, and closing
All	All	Open Mic - All are welcome to speak!

Speakers

Ken and Yvonne Iisaka

Ken Iisaka and his wife Yvonne, live in Foster City, California. Ken has made the finals of the last three Cliburn Amateur Competitions. Since then, he's taken the top prize in contests in St. Petersburg, Russia, and Washington, D.C. His activity in the amateur piano community has led to concert appearances in Germany, China, Japan, Canada, and across the United States. The Tokyo-born Canadian citizen has worked in software engineering since 1993, in California since 1999. He currently serves as lead software engineer for Indeed, a job search engine, in the artificial intelligence field. He also enjoys music criticism, writing regularly for the San Francisco Classical Voice. He finds competition necessary for the betterment of ourselves, to become better artists. It is the confrontation of the challenges of a competition that stands as a metaphor for his renewal.

In December of 2022, shortly after Ken completed his performance at a piano competition at Fort Worth Texas Ken suddenly collapsed from cardiac arrest. After 20 days in the hospital Ken was released to return home to live his second life.

Yvonne is also a piano teacher, a floral connoisseur, and an expert of Ikebana flower arrangement. Irene's urn is surrounded and enshrined by Yvonne's arrangement of delicate beauty that would resonate deeply with Irene.

Ken will be performing Sinding's Rustle of Spring. A piece with significant sentimental value for the meeting and eventual marriage of Irene and Jay Hsu.

Jay Hsu

Jay Hsu is the husband of Irene Hsu. Their oldest daughter Olivia lives in Chicago with her husband Mitch Friedman, and daughter Sabrina and son Kyle. Their son Eugene and his wife Kerri live in Fremont, California. Their youngest son Brian lives with his wife Stacy in San Carlos, California with their three children Reese, Emelia, and Luke. Jay lives in Fremont, California, just a five-minute walk from Eugene and Kerri.

Jay and Irene met at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and were married for 62 years. Jay will be speaking to Music as a binding mythos at the core of his relationship with Irene.

Wyman Chu

Dr Wyman Chu is a retired General Surgeon and the younger brother of Irene Hsu. Their older brother was Franklin Chu, who passed away in 1993. Wyman lives in Henderson, Nevada with his wife Anne Irene Chu. They have two daughters Christine and Carolyn, and one son Christopher.

Wyman will speak about the immigration of his family to the USA, and his relationship with his sister during these challenging years.

Helen Benham

Dr. Helen Benham, lives in Long Branch, New Jersey. Her husband is political scientist Dr. Samuel Kim, who most recently served as a Professor at Columbia University and is the Series Editor of the Asia in World Politics series of Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Their daughter, Sonya Guardo, an attorney, resides in Santa Monica, California, with her husband, Javier.

Helen is a musician who taught on the faculties of the Diller-Quaile School of Music and Mannes College of Music in New York City, and the Monmouth Conservatory of Music in Little Silver, New Jersey. She served 37 years as Professor of Music at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey, until her retirement in 2010. In addition, Helen has performed as pianist and harpsichordist in Europe, Canada, Taiwan, South Korea, and throughout the United States.

Helen first met Irene Hsu when she entered Brookdale Community College as an aspiring piano student. Helen will trace Irene's remarkable development from music student to accomplished performing pianist, to successful and dedicated piano teacher and colleague, to her manifold contributions as a member of the Shore Music Educators Association, and to their continued lifelong friendship following her move to California.

Mai Hsu

Mai is the younger sister of Jay Hsu. She lives in Los Angeles, California. She has one son Wade who lives in Florida, and one daughter Ling-An who lives in Denver Colorado.

Mai will speak to the deepest friendship bonded by war, immigration, and culture, with Irene as the force that brought people together.

Blanche Chien

The friendship of Irene and Blanche traces back to their husbands Jay and Ta-Mu working at Bell Labs in Holmdel, New Jersey. Blanche would be speaking to their friendship bonded by their shared love of creation, artistry, and all things of beauty.

Blanche is unable to join us for Irene's online memorial October 7th, 10AM-11:30AM. However we are bookmarking this space for Blanche to join us in the recorded event to be released at a later date.

Angela An

Angela is a television morning news anchor for a CBS affiliate in Columbus, Ohio. In her station bio, she proudly lists “classical pianist” as one of her other interests. Truth be told, Angela tells everyone that playing piano was her first love. She has Mrs. Hsu to thank for that.

Angela and her older sister Charlene started taking piano lessons from Mrs. Hsu in 1984 when their family moved to Holmdel, NJ. Her journey into piano competitions quickly blossomed into another talent Mrs. Hsu discovered in Angela – her love of teaching. At the age of 16, Angela took on some of Mrs. Hsu’s youngest students as a “junior instructor.” Over the years, the two would share stories of “piano life” versus “tv life” with Mrs. Hsu always ending the conversation saying, “I hope you’re still practicing piano.”

Eugene Hsu and Kerri Zhu

Eugene is the son of Irene and Jay Hsu. Eugene was based in China for 18 years and traveled the world. Eugene and his wife Kerri Zhu met in China, and returned to the USA in December of 2022 and are currently residing in Fremont California.

Kerri shared the passion for teaching with her mother-in-law Irene. She will provide her impressions and insights on Irene as the newest family member.

Eugene will speak to his mom’s dramatic last moments.

Pastor Drew Shih

Drew and his wife Sarah live in Woodside, California, with their four lovely daughters. Drew holds a Masters of Divinity from Regent College in Vancouver, BC. He is currently a prison chaplain in Silicon Valley and co-founder of the Fire & Rice Podcast, modern day stories of God working through His people. He is a part of multiple philanthropic and sustainable startups, serves as a consultant to churches, and provides experiential workshops for groups interested in spiritual development. Drew has served over 15 years in various international cities in 4 different countries in senior leadership roles such as Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, and Transitional Pastor. He has been called upon to consult and intervene for distressed churches, businesses, and groups needing stability, restoration, and spiritual discernment. He brings a nimble entrepreneurial mindset, global perspective, and a passion for justice, leadership development and spiritual formation.

Drew is a close friend of Irene's son Eugene. Drew met Irene for the first time and was at her bedside in her final hours.

Pastor Drew will provide theological perspective, scripture reading, and prayer to close the program.

Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The Hope of the Resurrection

13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died[a] so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died[c] will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words.

John 11:25-36

The Raising of Lazarus

25 Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. 26 Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." 28 Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." 29 So Mary immediately went to him.

30 Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. 31 When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. 32 When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. 34 "Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Then Jesus wept. 36 The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!"

1 John 4:7-12

Loving One Another

7 Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.