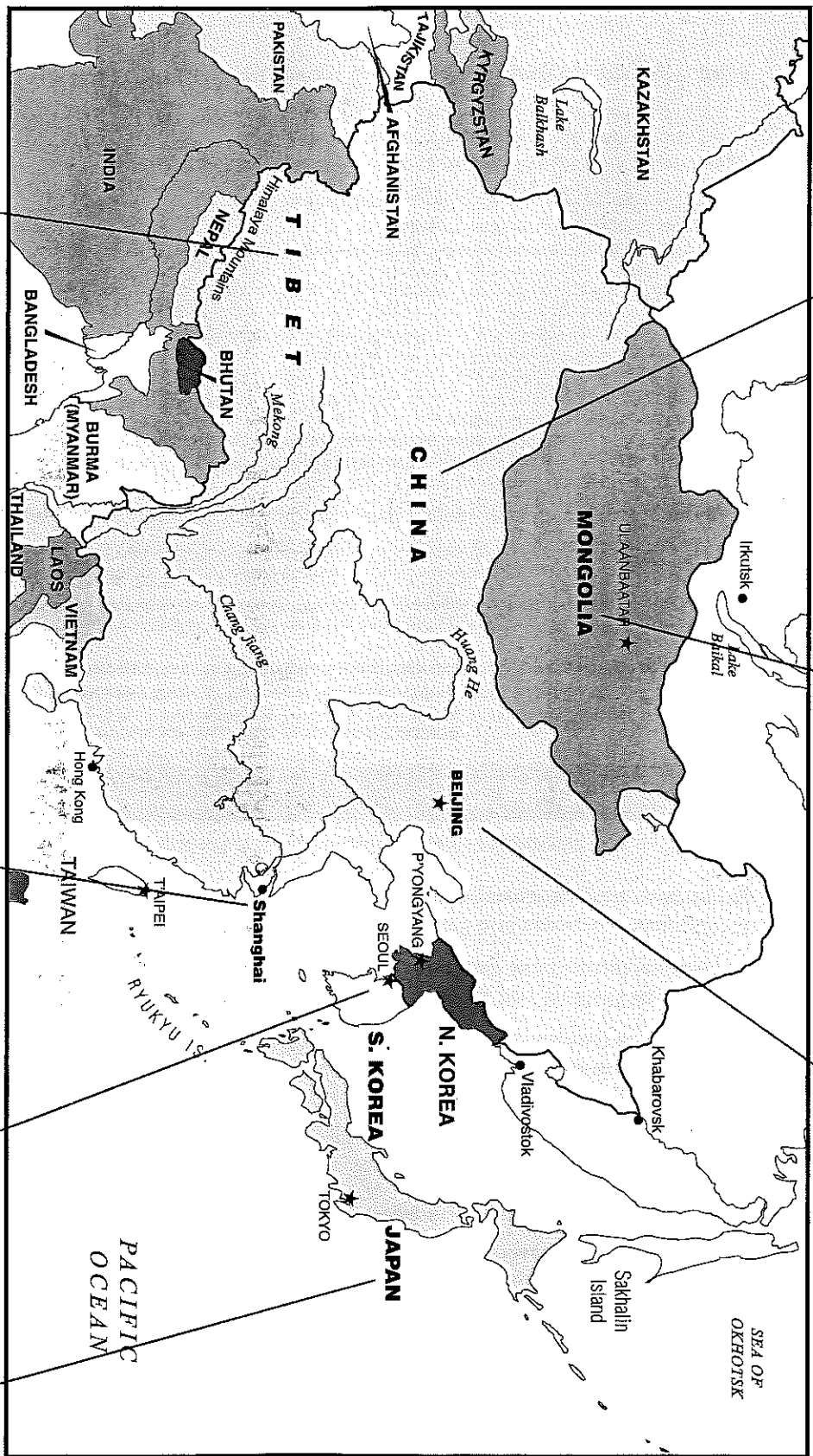




## East Asia: China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Tibet

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Site 1

Site 5

Sites 3 & 4

Site 9

Site 2

Site 6

Sites 7 & 8

## Background Preparation

Culturally, East Asia incorporates not just the immense nation of China but also North and South Korea, Japan, and Mongolia. Although disputed, Tibet and Taiwan are also parts of China, the latter remaining independent as the Republic of China. Geographically, East Asia also encompasses the eastern half of Russia, including Siberia, which constitutes Northeast Asia. East Asia is home to roughly one quarter of the earth's population: China has 1.38 billion people, the Koreas 71 million, Taiwan 23 million, and Japan 127 million, for a total of 1.56 billion. The other areas, including Mongolia and eastern Russia, have very slight populations spread over a vast territory. Tibet, an autonomous region of China, is often viewed by outsiders as a distinct nation under Chinese occupation while the Chinese government views it as an integral part of China.

The term *Chinese*, broadly speaking, can be applied to cultural activity found not only in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) but also in the self-governing city of Hong Kong and in other places where "Overseas Chinese" comprise important segments of the population. These places include Malaysia, where nearly one-third of the population is of Chinese ancestry, and the city-state of Singapore. Throughout the world there are cities with large Chinese populations, including Bangkok, Thailand; Manila, Philippines; Jakarta, Indonesia; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Toronto, Canada; New York, USA; London, UK, and in smaller concentrations throughout the world. Roughly ninety million people out of China's total population belong to some fifty-five non-Chinese minority groups, which are as diverse as the Hmong and Dai of the southwest and the Koreans of the northeast.

# 潮州弦诗全集

## 국제민속음악학회 회의 및 국제민속음악제

一つとや

ひと夜あくれば賑かで 賑かで、

おかざり立てたる松飾り 松飾り。

From top to bottom, the scripts are from China (top), Korea (middle), and Japan (bottom)

In spite of its immense size, East Asia is unified in numerous ways. Foremost among the factors that bind East Asian cultures together is an ideographic writing system developed by the Chinese millennia ago, in which icon-like "characters" have meaning rather than phonetic sound. At various times in history, each East Asian culture has adopted the Chinese writing system, allowing literate people in all areas to communicate even though the spoken languages (e.g., Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or Mongolian) were otherwise unrelated and mutually unintelligible. Over time, however, distinctive writing systems also developed in Japan, Korea, and Mongolia, while Vietnam romanized its writing system because of the influence of French and Portuguese missionaries.

Geography has played a major role in the development of East Asian culture. The original Chinese civilization, that of the "Han" Chinese, arose along the Yellow River in northern China forty centuries ago (c.2000 B.C.E.) and over time spread through the vast territory of East Asia, even into Southeast Asia. At the same time, Chinese civilization was profoundly influenced by outside cultures, especially those coming from Western and Central Asia along the "silk road." Many foreign elements, such as Buddhism, came to the Chinese first, were transformed into a Chinese form (a process called *sinicization*), and then absorbed and further modified by neighboring cultures. Within China, Han Chinese civilization spread mostly to the south and southeast, because much of eastern China is relatively flat, while the rest of the country consists of mountains, deserts, and high plateaus. Even today, in fact, the vast majority of China's billion-plus people live in the eastern third of the country. The Korean civilization developed on a peninsula to the northeast of China, and although Korea was profoundly influenced by China, its culture is otherwise distinct. Because the Korean peninsula is to the north and rather mountainous, Korea has limited arable land and harsh winters, and the Korean people have often had to struggle to survive. After the division of Korea into South and North Korea in 1945, the South has prospered and developed its own form of democracy, while the North has suffered immense ecological damage from industrialization and deforestation, which has brought cycles of droughts and floods. In addition, its autocratic government has brought isolation to North Korea. The result is that many people in the North are starving and much of their culture has been completely politicized.

Japan's culture is also deeply affected by its geography. Japan is a chain of islands, stretching from cold and bleak Hokkaido in the north to the warm and lush Ryukyu Islands trailing southwest from Kyushu, Japan's southernmost major island. Although influenced by Chinese civilization, Japan was relatively isolated until the nineteenth century, which allowed it to develop a distinct culture. With most of Japan's population, nearly half that of the United States, crowded into the main islands of Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—together smaller than the state of California—efficient land use is critical. The Japanese have developed an amazingly homogenous culture, though ethnic diversity certainly does exist, particularly in rural areas. The country's historical isolation from outside political and cultural influences until the mid-nineteenth century supports this mindset of the Japanese as a strongly nationalistic and unified entity.



	CHINA	KOREA	JAPAN
	ANTIQUITY		
B.C.E. 1200	Xia 21st to 16th century		
	Shang c. 1600–1045		
1100	Zhou 1045–256		
1000			
900			
800			ANTIQUITY
700	Spring and Autumn 770–476		Zyōmon to c. 200
600			
500			
400	Warring States 475–221		
300	DYNASTIES OF IMPERIAL CHINA		
200	Qin 221–206		Yayoi c. 200 B.C.E.–250 C.E.
100	Han 202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.		
C.E. 0			
100			
200	Three Kingdoms 220–280		
300	Jin 265–420	THREE KINGDOMS	
		Koguryō ?–668	Kohun Culture c. 300–400
400	Northern and Southern Dynasties 420–589	Paekche ?–660	
		Silla ?–668	
500	Sui 581–618		IMPERIAL PERIOD
600	Tang 618–907	DYNASTIES OF ROYAL KOREA	Asuka c. 550–710
		Unified Silla 668–935	
700			Nara 710–794
800			Heian 794–1192
900	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 902–979	Koryō 918–1392	
	Liao (Qidan [Khitan]) 916–1125		
1000	Song 960–1279		MEDIEVAL PERIOD
	Northern Song 960–1127		Kamakura 1192–1333
1100	Southern Song 1127–1279		
1200	Jin (Nüzhen [Jurchen]) 1115–1234		
1300	Yuan (Mongol) 1279–1368		Muromati 1334–1573
1400	Ming 1368–1644	Chosŏn 1392–1910	
1500			PREMODERN PERIOD
1600	Qing (Manchu) 1644–1911		Azuti–Momoyama 1573–1610
1700			Edo 1600–1867
1800	MODERN CHINA	MODERN KOREA	MODERN JAPAN
1900	Republic of China 1911–	Japanese colonial period 1910–1945	Meizi 1868–1912
	People's Republic of China 1949–	Republic of Korea (South) 1948–	Taisyō 1912–1926
2000		Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North) 1948–	Syōwa 1926–1989
			Heisei 1989–

## Luo Qin

As a professional violinist (concert-master), amateur composer, and occasional conductor, I had learned how to lead an orchestra and to create musical works for an ensemble. I was basically a Western-centered person at this time, although I was familiar with Chinese music and instruments as well. However, the graduate program at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where I majored in the history of Chinese music, changed my thoughts. After teaching at the Conservatory for several years, in 1991, as a young scholar and graduate student, I entered the Ethnomusicology program at the University of Washington and then went on for doctoral study in ethnomusicology at Kent State University. During my time in the States, I not only learned various musics from around the world but also came to understand the peoples, societies, and cultures related to these musics.

Through the study of the theories and practices of Ethnomusicology, I feel I became a true musician, scholar, and person who loves music, culture, people, and their lives. I specialize in two fields: the history of Chinese music and the urban ethno-orientated study of Shanghai City and its people. I have done much fieldwork and published several works, such as *History of Chinese Musical Instruments*; *Kunju, a Chinese Classical Theater and Its Revival in Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Contexts*; *Street Music: An Epitome of American Society and Culture*; *Heart & Music.com: World Music and Its Narration*, and others. I also love to create music for people who intend to communicate with each other by playing music. For example, while directing Kent State's Chinese Ensemble, I revised a violin

## AN INSIDE LOOK



Dr. Luo Qin, Professor of Musicology, Shanghai Conservatory of Music; president and editor-in-chief of Shanghai Conservatory Press

concerto called *The Butterfly Lovers* into a work combining violin solo and Chinese ensemble.

After receiving my Ph.D. degree I came back to China. At present, I am a Professor of Musicology at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, one of China's premier music institutions. In addition I am in charge of the Research Department. Through several years teaching, I have learned that I could and should do more if I want people to understand more musics and their cultures. Therefore, I entered the publishing business. Right now, I am the president and editor-in-chief of the Shanghai Conservatory Press. Nonetheless, I still teach. I hope to continue making contributions to the society in which I live and work and help more and more people to love music.

## Masayo Ishigure

## AN INSIDE LOOK

While growing up in Japan I started to learn the *koto* under the influence of my mother at the age of five. Because there was no child-sized *koto*, I had to use a full-size instrument from the beginning. For reasons unknown I loved to play the *koto* and never thought of quitting lessons. I first thought of the *koto* as a possible profession when I met Tadao Sawai, who was one of the greatest virtuosos and composers of *koto* music in the twentieth century. After studying under him at a music college, I became a special research student at the Sawai Koto Academy of Music. As a result of coming into contact with his outstanding music while improving my own performance skills every day, I was so fascinated with the depth of the *koto* music that I decided to become a professional *koto* player and teacher.

Mr. and Ms. Sawai had progressive ideas regarding the education of *koto* players. They actively accepted international students and sent high-level disciples to many countries such as the United States, Australia, and The Netherlands to promote the *koto* as well as Japanese culture generally. After moving to the United States in 1992 to teach *koto* to students at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, I participated in innovative performances involving classical orchestra, jazz musicians, and also made recordings for films and computer games. Participating in the recording for the sound track of *The Memoirs of a Geisha* with world-class musicians was an unusually fulfilling experience. At the same time I spend much of my time teaching the *koto*, currently involving about fifty students—half of them are Americans who are interested in Japan, and the rest are Japanese residing in the United States. I haven't changed my mind or beliefs when I'm teaching outside Japan, but I find that the students in the United States are quite free from the formal conventions usually associated with the traditional (conservative) art world in which I grew up. In my academy I give them chances to perform in front of large audiences as much as possible. I believe this is a joy for all the performers.



Masayo Ishigure professional *Koto* musician

In Japan the number of people playing traditional musical instruments is fewer than those playing Western music. In spite of this situation, traditional music has not been abandoned as an old-fashioned art but is still very much alive in the present time along with our famous theaters, "Noh" and "Kabuki". Why? You may think it strange that in Japan, a country known for its high-tech industry, there is also careful conservation of the traditional culture handed down from our ancestors. We love to participate in our culture's many seasonal events throughout the year. I think the sound of Japanese traditional musical instruments symbolizes a consciousness that lies deep both in our culture and in our individual psyches. Within this meaning, we can say that our musical instruments are devices to convey not only sound or

melody but also a metaphysical sense of who we are. Perhaps this type of sense exists within all Japanese people and the musical instruments merely reawaken such consciousness. The Japanese people will feel a "communal satisfaction" from it. It would be interesting to study whether foreign people develop the same sense as Japanese people,

or if they can create a new culture beyond their own tradition without having that sense.

The *koto* is the essence of my life. I have been fortunate to continue concentrating on the *koto* while living in a competitive music world for years without questioning my choice.

Whereas Western histories are conceived in terms of centuries, Chinese history—and by extension Korean and Japanese history—are conceived in terms of dynasties, a **dynasty** being a succession of related rulers, such as the Sung or the Ming. The Chinese dynastic chart reveals a fairly consistent pattern of change. First, an energetic new Chinese dynasty forms and quickly unifies the country under newly effective rule; then, over time the dynasty's effectiveness erodes, enemies begin nibbling at China's borders, and public services and safety break down; finally, the dynasty crumbles, and following a period of instability, a new dynasty establishes itself. Between China's greatest, most stable, and longest-lasting dynasties were periods of disunity and chaos, such as the "Warring States" period (403–221 B.C.E.) and the "Six Dynasties" (222–581 C.E.). During certain dynasties, such as the Yuan (1260–1370) and Qing (1636–1911), foreign invaders—in these cases, the Mongols and Manchurians respectively—dominated China. Even though the rulers were foreigners, the vast Chinese bureaucracy maintained a control over Chinese institutions that insulated them from foreign cultural influence. Indeed, some foreign conquerors such as the Mongolians and Manchurians ended up being Sinicized to the extent that their own cultural distinctiveness eroded or disappeared.

The arts have long been elements of the political process in China. Seeing the arts as far more than mere entertainment, the government has often harnessed music and theater for their ability to influence the thinking and behavior of the general population. Underlying this is a belief that music can have an influence on a person's ethical character. In ancient China—and by extension elsewhere in East Asia—the views of philosopher Kong Fuzi (551–479 B.C.E.; romanized as Confucius) had a profound influence on the role of music in the lives of the scholar class. In more recent times, Chairman Mao Zedong (1893–1976), China's communist leader from 1949 to 1976, not only believed that music and theater could influence people, but insisted the arts be harnessed by the state to create correct political thinking. Similarly, the government of North Korea has used music and related arts to influence its population.

#### DYNASTY

In China, a ruling family, like the Ming, and the era characterized by that family's dominance.

## Planning the Itinerary

Our musical tour will encompass China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. The music of each country is quite distinct in overall sound, timbre, character, and process. Yet all share certain traits that bind them together, making the concept of "East Asian" music a reasonable one. One way to explain this is through an analogy with food. If you have had opportunities to visit both Chinese and Japanese restaurants outside Asia (Korean, Mongolian, and Tibetan

restaurants are rarer), you have probably noticed striking differences. Those differences in the way food is prepared and presented and in overall atmosphere are analogous to some of the differences between the various countries' musics. Consider the décor: Chinese restaurants are usually highly decorated with colorful lanterns, dragons, and phoenixes (mythological birds) in strong shades of red, gold, blue, and green, whereas Japanese restaurants tend more toward plain white walls and natural wood, especially blond varieties. Whereas Chinese dishes, which feature colorful mixtures of many ingredients, are randomly placed on the table and shared by everyone, Japanese meals are usually served individually on lacquered trays with many compartments for well-separated delicacies. The space separating the food in Japanese restaurants is analogous to the silence separating sounds in Japanese music. Whereas the behavior of both patrons and staff in a Chinese restaurant—especially in Chinese cities—is informal, enthusiastically loud and busy, behavior encountered in a Japanese restaurant is much more formal, quiet, and subtle. Once again, many of these distinctions also apply to Chinese and Japanese music.

A second analogy may perhaps help explain some of the major differences in East Asian attitudes toward “tradition,” preservation, and change. Consider the following metaphor: a wonderful, ancient bridge (akin to traditional music) occupies a key position in a city. Because it is no longer adequate to handle modern traffic, the government calls for engineers to study the situation—one Chinese, one Korean, and one Japanese. After a thorough consideration, the Chinese engineer announces that the bridge will be “preserved” by bringing it up to modern standards. Workers will replace and widen the deck, put on new railings, add modern lampposts, rebuild the support system, and level the approaches. Thus,



The statue of China's greatest philosopher and teacher, Kong Fuzi (Confucius), in the Kong temple of Quanzhou, China

they claim, the old bridge will remain, but it will have been "improved" and "modernized." The Korean and Japanese engineers, however, conclude that the bridge is wonderful in its present form and should be preserved as it is. Recognizing the demands of modern travel, however, the engineers recommend both keeping the old bridge open for those who prefer to use it and building a new one nearby for those who need it.

Thus, in China most "traditional" music struggles to survive as best it can, while newly arranged and orchestrated music, considered "improved" and "modernized" by many Chinese officials, is commonly used to represent Chinese music to the outside world. In Korea and Japan, however, institutions both public and private preserve all surviving forms of traditional music and theater as living anachronisms in an otherwise modern world. As a result there is little difficulty in defining "tradition" in Korea and Japan. Within China there are differing views of what is traditional and what music should represent China, while foreign researchers often have views that contradict those of the Chinese. The state of traditional music in Mongolia resembles the Chinese situation, whereas traditional Tibetan music survives intact, including among exiles living in countries such as India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

## Arrival: China

As with all major civilizations, the Chinese developed their great cities and agricultural centers along rivers and around great lakes. Indeed, the names of many Chinese provinces reflect geographical features. For example, the name of Shandong province means "east of the mountains," while Shanxi means "west of the mountains." Similarly, Hubei is "north of the lake" and Hunan is "south of the lake." China's greatest threats in earlier times came from the northern border areas where non-Chinese invaders, including the Jürched, the Mongols (of Chinggis (also spelled Genghis) Khan fame), and the Manchu originated. China's Great Wall, stretching 1,400 miles over the northern mountains, was built to keep out the northern "barbarians."

Being a vast land, China has more than one gateway city. These include Beijing (the capital), Shanghai (China's largest city and commercial center), and Guangzhou (its most internationalized city). Beijing, a sprawling city of thirteen million built around the spacious Forbidden City (the former palace of the emperors), is the center of government and culture, whereas Shanghai and Guangzhou are centers of industry, commerce, and banking. The majority of the Chinese population lives in eastern China, an area with a remarkable number of surprisingly large cities unknown to most foreigners. Though little known to outsiders, Shandong province in central China nonetheless produces products that are much appreciated. Owing to Shandong's earlier "colonization" by Germany, it is the center of Chinese beer-making, with Qingdao being the home of "Tsingtao" beer. But to the Chinese, Shandong is more important as the ancestral home of Kong Fuzi (Confucius) in the small city of Qufu near the sacred mountain called Tai Shan.

China has undergone an extreme makeover since the 1990s, and the construction crane is far more prominent than temples or red-tiled roofs. Skyscrapers, department stores, vast restaurants, and wide, traffic-clogged roads represent China today, and one cannot go far without stumbling on a McDonalds ("Mai dang lao"), Pizza Hut ("Pi shang ke"), KFC ("Ken de ji"), or Wal-Mart ("wo er ma"). In this din of modernity, traditional music is only one small voice.





In terms of culture, it is customary to make a distinction between northern and southern China. One essential difference is that the northern Chinese prefer wheat (in the form of flatbreads, dumplings, and noodles), because it grows more readily in the relatively dry and temperate north, whereas in southern China, which is subtropical, rice is the fundamental carbohydrate. Even within northern or southern China, there are numerous regional distinctions, often identified with specific provinces. As is widely known, there are regional styles of Chinese cuisine, such as Sichuan (Szechuan), Hunan, Guangdong (Cantonese), Shanghai, Beijing, and so forth. Language is also regional, because Chinese civilization developed in relatively isolated pockets. While all Chinese languages are related (as all the European Romance languages are), many are also mutually unintelligible, even though the writing system is the same for all. Even within a single province there are several languages; in Guangdong, for example, these include Cantonese, Hakka, and Chaozhou. At the provincial level, languages may differ markedly from village to village because the mountainous terrain imposes such isolation. Today's national language, called *Mandarin* in English and *pu tong hua* in Chinese, originated in the north. Regional distinctions are also extremely important in Chinese music, especially in the narrative and theatrical genres.

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, most writing on Chinese music focused on ancient instruments, rituals, and aesthetic principles. The great Chinese music documents often took into account the living music of the time, but when Westerners began writing about Chinese music, they tended to omit living music. European scholars from the early twentieth century often viewed living music as unsophisticated and insignificant remnants of the glorious past. Ethnomusicological research into Chinese music only blossomed during the last three decades of the twentieth century, because, in earlier years, China had been off limits to most foreign researchers because of near continuous war from the 1920s until 1949 and the country's later political convulsions. This was particularly so during the **Cultural Revolution** (1966–1976), a top-down upheaval initiated by Chairman Mao Zedong and his influential wife, Jiang Qing, a former actress. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, a few foreign researchers came to China at a time when most Chinese scholars were still collecting “folk music” for use in compositions by conservatory-trained professionals. Much of the new research, however, was confined to urban phenomena because the government for some time rarely permitted research in rural areas and favored sending conservatory ensembles on foreign tours. Today the government no longer views music as a tool of propaganda and has allowed all kinds of music to flourish as best they can. But the question of what music best represents Chinese culture to the outside world remains a topic for discussion even today.

China has an incredibly diverse array of instruments, many of which had origins outside China but were Sinicized over time. Traditionally, the Chinese classified musical instruments into eight categories, known collectively as the *bayin* (or “eight materials”)—namely, wood, bamboo, metal, stone, clay, skin, silk, and gourd. For the Chinese, the number “8” had a philosophical and aesthetic significance, and a philosophically complete ensemble would necessarily include instruments from all eight categories. Many ensemble types have names that refer to these material categories, including one studied here, the “silk and bamboo” ensemble (*sizhu*).

Chinese music is fundamentally vocal music. Besides a vast quantity of regional folk songs, there are many regional forms of narrative song and theater, the latter always having music. Because of the language problem, however, Western recording companies have preferred to release instrumental music, giving a skewed impression of the reality in China.

#### CULTURAL REVOLUTION

A ten-year period in China's history, from 1966–1976, marked by severe social and political upheaval.

#### BAYIN

The Chinese organological system based on eight materials.

#### SIZHU

A “silk and bamboo” music ensemble, comprising Chinese stringed (“silk”) instruments and flutes (“bamboo”).

Chinese music is primarily based on melodies that can exist in any number of guises and contexts, be they vocal or instrumental, solo or ensemble. Most have programmatic titles that allude to nature (e.g., "Autumn Moon and Lake Scenery"), literature or myth (e.g., "Su Wu the Shepherd"), a mood (e.g., "Joyous Feelings"), or even musical structure (e.g., "Old Six Beats"). Whether a composer's name is known or not—most are anonymous—the tune exists at an almost conceptual level, ready to be performed as an unaccompanied or accompanied instrumental solo, an ensemble piece, a song with or without accompaniment, an orchestral piece arranged for modern ensemble, or even as an operatic aria or modern popular song.

Besides this vast body of instrumental and vocal music, there is also the now rarely heard but once vibrant narrative tradition in which singers combined speaking and singing to tell long tales, accompanied by one or more instruments. More prevalent today are the nearly countless regional forms of theater, all of which have music and singing as integral parts. Beyond these one could also explore a variety of forms of instrumental and vocal music associated with Daoism and Buddhism, as well as the now revived music of Confucian ritual. The twentieth century also saw the development of many new forms of Chinese music reflecting "international" (read, "Western") influence, from violin-inspired *erhu* fiddle playing, to fully orchestrated arrangements of Chinese traditional melodies played by Western-style orchestras using "traditional" instruments, to all manner of Western-style classical music and popular song. Now experiencing a surprising revival is the politically influenced Revolutionary Operas and Revolutionary Ballets created during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and imposed on the population to the exclusion of all else during that difficult time.



Inner court of  
the Kong Temple  
(Confucian) temple  
in Quanzhou,  
China

## Site 1: The *Guqin* (Seven-String "Ancient" Zither)

**QIN/GUQIN**  
A bridgeless,  
plucked zither with  
seven strings.

**First Impressions.** The *guqin* represents Chinese culture at its most historical and refined. Many first-time listeners are struck by its sparseness, its lack of a clear beat, and its variety of odd timbres, including scraping sounds and ringing overtones. The character of the music is intimate and meditative, as if the performer were just playing for himself. Indeed, this quiet contemplation was for centuries a music particular to Chinese scholars and philosophers.

**Aural Analysis.** The *guqin* (also spelled (*gu*) *ch'in*—pronounced "chin") is one of the most ancient instruments in the world to have remained in continuous use. The instrument is a roughly 51 inch (130 cm)-long rectangular board zither made of paulownia wood (top only) painted black, and has seven strings, traditionally of twisted silk, running lengthwise from end to end, without frets or bridges. There is also a series of eleven inlaid mother-of-pearl circles along one side marking the acoustical nodes or vibration points for each string. To the player's left, the strings pass over the end and are tied underneath to two small peg-like feet attached to the instrument's lower board. At the right end the strings run over a slight ridge that acts as a bridge, then pass through holes to the underside where each is tied to a small wooden peg. The instrument is tuned by twisting these pegs to loosen or tighten the string's tension. The player, seated on a chair with the instrument on a table or frame, plucks the strings with the fingers of the right hand and stops the strings with the fingers of the left hand.



The Chinese *guqin* (seven-string bridgeless zither), one of China's most ancient instruments

The characteristic timbres of the *guqin* are many, as a typical performance includes plucked sounds produced either by the nail or the flesh of the finger, tone-bending created by the sliding movements of the left hand, and the use of harmonics (clear, hollow sounds produced by gently touching the string at a node). Scraping sounds are produced when the player slides the left hand along the rough textured strings. Sometimes these sliding movements continue even after the string has stopped vibrating, expressing the view that music does not have to be heard to exist. Each string is tuned differently, but many of the same pitches can be produced at various nodes on different strings. Sometimes a pitch is repeated not on one string but on different strings or stopping points, which creates a series of slightly different timbres. While *guqin* music is fundamentally pentatonic (comprising five tones), other pitches may come into play, though all sound familiar enough to ears accustomed to the Western tuning system, because the Chinese system is similarly constructed.

Rhythmically, *guqin* music sounds fluid, improvisational, alternately halting or rushing, especially because often there is no clear beat to define a steady meter. *Guqin* notation is in a form called *tablature*; more precisely, it consists of a chart that indicates how to pluck, stop, or touch each string, with minimal indications of pitch or rhythm. Thus, it is left up to each individual performer to express the meaning of a piece in his or her own idiosyncratic rendition.

*Guqin* music, like most traditional Chinese music, is basically monophonic, but is more often built of short motives rather than extended melodic lines. For this reason, *guqin* compositions may sound inconsistent at times because they can suddenly change style or mood. Perhaps this explains why the *guqin* is a connoisseur's instrument and its sound something of an acquired taste.

Our example, titled "Yangguan Sandie" (Parting at Yangguan—a mountain pass used as an outpost in ancient China), illustrates the most common *guqin* traits: a contemplative atmosphere, a rather changeable form, and a great variety of subtly different timbres. Much of the beginning is played with stopped tones, but there are brief passages of harmonics at 1'30." During some of the higher-range passages you can clearly hear the scraping sounds, produced as a finger or thumb of the left hand slides up or down to reach the next pitch.

色 瑟 筇 篋 五 句 瑟 筇 瑟 六 筇 瑟 篋 句 达 瑟  
 瑟 筇 五 瑟 筇 瑟 篋 句 达 句 瑟 筇 瑟 属 筇 瑟  
 篋 句 三 瑟 筇 四 瑟 筇 瑟 瑟 三 句 瑟 筇 瑟

*Guqin* tablature notation

TABLATURE  
 Notation that  
 indicates how to  
 pluck, stop, or touch  
 each string rather  
 than indicating pitch.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 1.16 (2'04")

## Chapter 7: Site 1

China: *Guqin* ("Ancient Zither")Instruments: *Guqin* (bridgeless plucked zither)

## TIME LISTENING FOCUS

- 0'00"** Melodic theme begins performance.
- 0'12"** Listen for tone-bending as the performer slides between pitches.
- 0'21"** Listen for "scratching" sounds that add timbral variation.
- 0'35"** Listen for subtle variations in timbre as the performer plays the same pitch on two different strings.
- 0'37"** Melodic variation of the opening theme.
- 1'29"** Melodic variation of the opening theme using harmonic overtones until 1'35".

Source: "Yangguang sandie," performed and recorded by Bell Yung, Pittsburgh, PA, 2002. Used by permission.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 1.16):** Find a chordophone—for example, a guitar—and sound the overtones on a single string by lightly touching various harmonic nodes (at the mid-point, or a quarter or an eighth along the length of the string, for example) while plucking with your other hand.

**Cultural Considerations.** From ancient times and continuing at least into the nineteenth century, the *guqin* was closely associated with the *literati* or scholar class, from which the Chinese government chose its officials. Scholars were required to be knowledgeable in Confucian Chinese literature, poetry, calligraphy, divination, history, philosophy, and music. Music, rather than being a pleasurable or sensuous art, was a way of inculcating and expressing the ethical values of Confucianism, which include restraint, order, balance, subtlety, and hierarchy. Nonetheless, much *guqin* music is indeed quite sensuous. When scholars played a *guqin* composition, they had to flesh out and interpret the minimalist score by taking into account the meaning of the piece, its mood, and their own feelings in relation to it. In short, *guqin* music was a form of personal expression that aided in self-development and brought the player closer to China's highest ideals through a kind of sonic meditation.

Because *guqin* playing was part of a scholar's general cultivation of learning and of sensitivity to the arts, it is not surprising that "Parting at Yangguan" was inspired by a poem—specifically, a Tang Dynasty poem by Wang Wei (701–761) titled "Seeing Yuan Er Off to Anxi." Sometimes performers will sing this poem as they play "Parting at Yangguan" on the *guqin*, because the form of the composition closely parallels the poem's verse

structure. The earliest tablature notation of "Parting at Yangguan" appeared in 1491 in a collection titled *Zhiyin Shizi Qinpu*, although the version performed here is from an 1864 publication.

*Guqin* playing, because it was cultivated by a small elite, was probably always rare and little known to the general public. Today it is similarly rare, and the scholar class of bureaucrats who once practiced *guqin* playing along with their calligraphy and poetry has long been abandoned by Communist Party functionaries. Nonetheless, *guqin* players of many nationalities are still found throughout the world in small numbers, and in recent years, these scattered groups of musicians have been linked together by the Internet. In 2003, UNESCO designated *guqin* playing as an "Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

## Site 2: *Jiangnan Sizhu* ("Silk and Bamboo") Ensemble from Shanghai

**First Impressions.** Most listeners find China's "silk and bamboo" ensemble music readily accessible. Compared to *guqin* music, one can more easily hear a tune, clear phrases, consistent rhythm, and repetition of certain musical ideas. The music is quite busy, as each instrument plays continuously throughout and makes frequent use of ornamentation. But, because most instruments play in a high range, the overall sound is "thin," due to the lack of low range instruments and absence of harmony.

**Aural Analysis.** Why the name *silk and bamboo (sizhu)*? Recall that the Chinese classified instruments according to eight materials. "Silk" instruments are those with strings, both plucked and bowed, because the original material used for strings was twisted silk. "Bamboo" instruments are flutes, both vertical and horizontal. Thus a "silk and bamboo" ensemble consists of fiddles, lutes, and flutes, with or without a few small percussion instruments. These ensembles play named compositions or tunes from a limited repertory, especially the "eight great compositions" that every musician must know.

Some *Jiangnan* compositions, like much Chinese music generally, have titles that suggest an emotion, allude to a poem, describe a scene, or reference something historical. Our example's title, "Huan Le Ge," means "Song of Joy" and suggests its character as a "happy" piece. But *Jiangnan* music also has a great many pieces whose titles suggest musical structure, such as "Lao Liu Ban" meaning "old six beats" and referring to the structure of the original notation. Another well-known piece in the repertory is "Zhong Hua Liu Ban," literally, "middle flowers, six beats," also describes technical aspects of the music's organization. The Chinese term *fangman jiahua* means "slowing down and adding flowers" (i.e., ornaments), and thus *zhonghua* refers to a "middle" degree of ornamentation (*zhong* is "middle" and *hua* is "flower"). This process of "adding flowers" suggests a traditional approach to embellishing melodies spontaneously but according to the idiomatic characteristics of each instrument.

The "silk" category includes a wide variety of bowed and plucked stringed instruments, including certain lower-range versions introduced during the twentieth century as part of China's drive to modernize. Four instruments, however, are essential: the *erhu* (fiddle), *yangqin* (hammered zither), *pipa* (pear-shaped lute), and *dizi* (horizontal bamboo flute). Other instruments can be used as well. Our track adds the *xiao* (vertical notch flute), *ruan*



This amateur *Jiangnan sizhu* "silk and bamboo" music group meets each Sunday afternoon in a neighborhood school in Shanghai to play through favorite compositions



The Chinese *erhu* (two-stringed fiddle)

(round bodied long-neck lute), *san xian* (three-stringed lute), plus two small percussion instruments, a *ban* woodblock struck with a small beater in the right hand and a *gu-ban* clapper held by the left hand.

The *erhu* fiddle consists of a round or hexagonal wooden resonator with python skin covering one face. The scales of the snakeskin influence the timbre of the instrument: larger scales produce a deeper sound, while smaller scales encourage the preferred thin and grittier timbre of the *erhu*. A long stick serving as the neck pierces the body and has two rear tuning pegs at the top. Two strings, traditionally of silk but now often nylon, run the length of the instrument, although their acoustic length is limited to the section between the string loop along the neck and the bridge in the middle of the resonator. The horsehairs of the bow pass between the two strings, and the player pulls or pushes the bow hairs against the appropriate string while touching the strings with the left hand to create specific pitches; unlike the violin, the strings are not pressed so as to touch the neck.

The *yangqin* dulcimer, formerly a small trapezoidal-shaped instrument with two rows of bridges, was modified during the twentieth century to increase its range and power, first to three bridge sets, then four, and most recently to five or six. Each "string" is actually a course of two or three strings, which the player strikes with two small bamboo beaters, one in each hand. The *yangqin* is often used as an accompanying instrument, much like the piano in Western music.

The *pipa* lute is one of China's quintessential instruments, as it has an extensive solo repertory in addition to appearing in ensembles. It has a hollow wooden pear-shaped body with four strings that pass over raised bamboo frets that allow for the use of all twelve tones



The Chinese *yang qin* (hammered zither)

The Chinese *pipa*  
(pear-shaped lute)



The Chinese *dizi*  
(bamboo flute)

of the Chinese tuning system. Earlier instruments had fewer frets because older Chinese music used only seven tones. The player, using fingernails or plectra covering the nails of the right hand, plucks the strings in an *outward* fashion (unlike finger-picking a guitar). The use of all five fingers in rapid-fire motion to sustain a pitch during some passages is a particularly distinctive stylistic feature of *pipa* performance.

The *dizi* is a bamboo tube ranging in length from about 16 inches (41 cm) to 2 feet (51 cm), with a blowing hole at the left end, a membrane hole, and six finger holes. The membrane hole must be covered with a thin membrane taken from the inside of a piece of bamboo. When properly attached and stretched, this skin vibrates to create a buzz that gives the *dizi* its particular timbre, somewhat like a subtle kazoo.

While some regional styles of Chinese music make use of pitches that sound out of tune to Western ears, "silk and bamboo" styles originating in the Shanghai region, such as our example, use pitches that sound quite familiar. Players need only instruments capable of playing the seven regular pitches of the D major scale. Seven pitches are required even though the music is essentially pentatonic, because the melodies expand to more than five pitches through shifts in tonal center or conjunct passages. The two most common keys—called *diao* in Chinese—are D and G, especially in the Shanghai area. Unlike *guqin* music, the meter of which is often vague, "silk and bamboo" music has a clear duple meter, with obvious downbeats and upbeats. Rhythms tend to be relatively simple, with nothing more complex being found than a few syncopations and many dotted values.

What might strike you about our example, though, is that all the musicians are playing the same tune—but differently, resulting in a heterophonic structure. Heterophony is a fundamental phonic structure of most east and southeast Asian traditional music ensembles. Virtually all instruments in *sizhu* have a high range, giving the music a bright, busy quality. If you listen carefully, you can hear the timbres of individual instruments and differences in the way each plays a phrase. The *erhu* "slides" into some notes, the *dizi* "flutters," the *pipa* utilizes its tone-bending and "rapid-fire" plucking techniques, while the *yangqin* "bounces" along adding occasional ornamentations, primarily at the octave. Also notice that the instruments play all the time and that there is little or no shading of dynamics. This type of music is quite tuneful, so you may find yourself humming the catchier melodies, some of which are quite well known and are part of the foundational repertory of Chinese music. Even though such compositions are tuneful, the more advanced repertory—of which "Huan Le Ge" is an example—tends to be through-composed or continuously unfolding. What binds a piece together is the use of a number of short musical motives that reappear often, as well as the use of a single key and a consistent heterophonic structure. For the most part, this music is played at one dynamic level and with little more subtlety as far as tempo is concerned than a slowing down at the end. What makes the music fascinating, however, is the ever-evolving interplay of the different instruments, which makes each performance unique in its details.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 1.17 (5'32")

## Chapter 7: Site 2

China: *Jiangnan Sizhu* ("Silk and Bamboo") Ensemble

Instruments: *Erhu* (bowed lute), *gahu* (bowed lute), *pipa* (plucked lute), *dizi* (flute), *yangqin* (hammered zither), *zhong ruan* (mid-range plucked lute), *ban* (woodblock idiophone) and *gu ban* (hand-held clapper).

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Wood block ( <i>ban</i> ) initiates the piece.
0'06"	All instruments enter following a heterophonic structure. Listen attentively for the timbre of each instrument and note the individual interpretations of the melodic line. The initial five pitches are noted as 3, 2 3, 5, 1.
0'29"	Listen for the brief sustain on the sixth scale degree (6) of the pentatonic scale (1, 2, 3, 5, 6). Note that an additional pitch (7) appears as a passing tone periodically throughout the performance (e.g., 0'33", 1'18", 1'54", etc.).
0'48"	Melodic resolution on first scale degree (1).
1'07"	Brief sustain on sixth scale degree (6). Listen for such sustains on this pitch throughout the performance (e.g., 1'44", 3'04", etc.).
1'27"	Melodic resolution on the first scale degree and again at 2'03".
2'44"	Brief sustain on third scale degree (3). Listen for such sustains on this pitch throughout the performance (e.g., 3'13", 3'32", etc.).
2'50"	Brief tonal shift to second scale degree (2).
3'39"	Melodic resolution on the first scale degree and again at 4'25".
4'28"	Musicians pause and then transition to faster tempo section.
5'16"	Tempo slows to final resolution on the first scale degree (1).

Source: "Huan Le Ge" recorded in Shanghai, PR China by Terry E. Miller, 2007.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 1.17):** Using the pitches indicated in the Listening Guide, notate the basic outline of the melody using cipher (numeral) notation.

**Cultural Considerations.** As with Chinese cuisine, "silk and bamboo" music is regional, and there are at least four distinct traditions. Our example, as we have already noted, represents the tradition found in and around Shanghai. Because the mile-wide Yangtze River, the more southern of China's two major rivers, reaches the ocean at Shanghai, it forms a major



*Jiangnan sizhu* meeting: three lutes (from left to right) small *san xian* (three-stringed lute), *ruan* (round lute), and *pipa* (pear-shaped lute)

geographical marker for the region. For this reason, the region is known as *Jiangnan* ("south of the river"), and the "silk and bamboo" music from the area is called *Jiangnan sizhu* or the "silk and bamboo music south of the river." Other distinct regional types include *Cantonese* (from Guangdong province in the south), *Chaozhou* (from eastern Guangdong province), and *Nanguan* (from Xiamen and Quanzhou in southern Fujian province).

"Silk and bamboo" music is best described as an amateur music because it is typically played by non-professionals in a casual clubhouse setting for their own pleasure, rather than on a stage for an audience. Originally, however, Jiangnan music was more widely heard in other settings, including weddings, and was also used to accompany one of the operatic genres of Shanghai as well as a local narrative singing tradition. As in many Asian cultures, professional musicians in China traditionally had a low social status, especially those who played for opera performances, weddings, and above all funerals. "Silk and bamboo" ensembles allowed ordinary working people the opportunity to be artistic without being tainted as "professional musicians." While all regional styles are typically played in a private clubhouse or meeting room situations, the *Jiangnan* style can be heard by visitors to the Mid-Lake Pavilion Teahouse in Shanghai's historical district, where the sounds of the music mingle with the chatter of patrons and the clatter of dishes. In addition, music conservatories now teach students to play this music but from refined, fully written-out arrangements.

Experienced Chinese musicians play without notation from a knowledge of the tune's basic structure plus the idiomatic characteristics of the instrument. Less experienced musicians may prefer to read notation using *jianpu*, a form of Chinese notation using Arabic numerals (referred to as cipher notation in English). Probably adopted originally from Western missionaries, most likely from France, who brought hymnals printed in numeral



Measures 1-3 of "Huan Le Ge" in *jianpu* (numeral) notation. Pitch 1 is Western pitch D or do. Order of instruments from top to bottom: *dizi* (horizontal flute), *sheng* (mouth organ), *pipa* (lute), *san xian* (three-stringed lute), *yangqin* (dulcimer), *erhu* (fiddle), *zhong hu* (middle-range fiddle), and *ban/gu* (clapper and drum). Ed. Ma Sheng-Long and published in Shanghai in 1986/2000.

## 欢 乐 歌

1=D  $\frac{4}{4}$

J=92

曲 笛	3. 2	3 5	1. 2 3 5	2 1 6 1	5 5	3. 5 6 1	5 6 3 2	5. 6	1 6 1 2	3 2 3 5	2 3 2 1	6 5 6 1
小 笙	3	3 5	1. 3	2 1 6 1	5 5	3 5 6 1	5 3 2	5. 6	1. 2	3 5	2 3 1	6 5 6 1
琵琶	3	3 5	1. 2 3 5	2 1 6 1	5 5 <sup>+</sup>	3 3 5 6 5 6 1	5 5 6	5 3 5 6	1 6 1 2	3 2 3 5	2 3 2 1	6 1 2 3
小三弦	3	3 5	1. 3 3	2 3 6 3	5 5	3 5 6 6	5 3	5 5 5 6	1 1 1 2	3 2 3 5	2 3 2 1	6 5 6 1
扬 琴	$\frac{3}{8}$ 2	3 5	1. 1 2	6 5 6 1	5 5	3 5 6 1	5 5	5 5 5 6	1 1 1 2	3 2 3 5	2 2 2 1	6 5 6 1
二 胡	$\frac{n}{3}$	3 5	1. 2	7 6	5 5	3 5 6 1	5 1	5. 6	1. 2	3 5	2 1	7 6
中 胡	$\frac{n}{3}$	3 5	6 1	3 2 3	5 4 5	3 5 6 1	5 3 2	5. 6	1. 2	3. 5	2 3 2 1	6 1 2 3
板、鼓	1	X O X X	X X	X	1	0	X X		1 O X X	X X	X X	X



A Jiangnan sizhu ("silk and bamboo") ensemble playing informally in its meeting room, Shanghai, China (Phong Nguyen)

notation, *jianpu* is quite practical and easy to read. Regardless of key, the "home" pitch (tonic or keynote) is 1. In "D diao" (key of D), 1 is D, 3 is F#, and 5 is A, but in "G diao" pitch 1 is G, 3 is B, and 5 is D.

Though Chinese melodies are mostly diatonic and remain in a single key, this notation can also be used to notate more complex compositions using additional signs from Western

staff notation, such as sharps (#) or flats (b) and other graphic signs. Much traditional music is played in D and G *diao*, though other keys are possible. Dots above or below a number indicate octaves above and below the main octave, respectively. Rhythm/duration is indicated with horizontal lines below the numbers, while measures are marked with vertical lines.

### Site 3: Beijing Opera (*Jingju*)

**First Impressions.** On listening to our recorded example, you probably cannot help but notice the clangor of the percussion, particularly the “rising” and “falling” sound of the gongs. The prominent fiddle is quite nasal-sounding and some of the pitches it plays probably strike you as out of tune. The vocal quality is piercing compared to most world music traditions, particularly in comparison to opera traditions from the West. The music of the Beijing Opera is often challenging for first-time listeners to appreciate, although the chance to see a live performance would no doubt win some new fans with its visual spectacle: the vivid costumes, the striking painted faces of some of the performers, and the stage action—especially the acrobatics, which are inspired by Chinese martial arts.

**Aural Analysis.** With many musics from around the world, timbre is the aspect that most challenges the first-time listener due to unfamiliarity with the instrument sounds and vocal styles. This is certainly true of Beijing Opera, called *jingju* (meaning “capital city opera”) in Chinese. For most listeners, even in China, the vocal quality of *jingju* is decidedly different from what is normally encountered. All roles are sung with little or no vibrato, and many sound rather nasal and quite high in range. Men playing female roles, a common practice

#### JINGJU

Literally “capital city opera,” known as “Beijing” or “Peking” Opera.



*Jingxi* (Beijing Opera) performance: a red-faced general is flanked by a painted face (*jing*) to his left and a young man (*xiao sheng*) to his right

in *jingju*, use the falsetto (or “head”) voice. The *jing* (painted-face characters) tend to sing in a rough, declamatory style.

The instrumental accompaniment is a combination of melodic and percussion instruments that play as two groups. The melodic group is divided into “civil” and “military” sections, the former led by the genre’s distinctive short, two-stringed bamboo fiddle, called *jinghu*, the latter by the loud double-reed called *suona*. Other melodic instruments include an *erhu* fiddle, the moon-shaped *yue qin* lute, and sometimes other lutes, such as the *pipa*. The military group, comprised entirely of percussion, is led by a “conductor” who plays a clapper (*guban*) held in the left hand, and uses a stick held in the right hand to beat on a distinctive small drum (*bangu*). He is accompanied by musicians playing both large and small gongs and cymbals. The conductor’s drum has a dry, hollow timbre, while the tone of the large gong (*dalu*) decays downward (i.e., its pitch drops as its volume falls), and that of the small gong (*xiaoluo*) decays upward (its pitch rises as the volume falls). Besides marking beats, these percussion instruments also provide sound effects that symbolize actions, emotions, or objects.

Singers have to work closely with both the “conductor” and the *jinghu* player, because singing is improvised according to a host of variables, which comprise what is called a “modal system.” This practice is quite unlike that of many other regional opera traditions, which require lyricists simply to write poetry to fit pre-existing, named tunes. Simply put, the “modal system” that governs the creation of melody here consists of several variables that allow for a kind of composition simultaneous with performance. Among these are: (1) role type; (2) melodic mode; (3) metrical/rhythmic pattern, and (4) linguistic tone.

Our example features an aria from the opera *Mu Kezhai* (named after the main character), which is sung by a female warrior, Mu Guiying, the daughter of an infamous outlaw from the Sung Dynasty. After an introductory section performed by the percussion, during which she performs militaristic stage actions, the female warrior begins singing in speech-like rhythms, accompanied by the melodic instruments. After another percussion interlude, she begins a section in a regular duple meter during which the conductor’s clapper is clearly heard.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 1.18 (3'24")

### Chapter 7: Site 3

### China: Beijing Opera (*Jingju*)

Vocal: Single female (*Dan*)

Instruments: *Ban gu* (wood clapper/drum), *xiao luo* (small, high-pitched gong), *da luo* (large, low-pitched gong), cymbals, *jinghu* (high-range bowed lute), *erhu* (middle-range bowed lute), *yue qin* (plucked lute)

#### TIME LISTENING FOCUS

- 0'00" Percussion introduction begins with the *ban gu*, followed by the gongs and cymbals.
- 0'01" Listen for the “rising” pitch of the small gong compared with the “falling” pitch of the larger gong.

- 0'21" Short percussion break. Instruments resume in anticipation of the vocal solo.
- 0'32" Melodic ensemble enters. Note that the music is in free rhythm.
- 0'55" Vocalist enters. Listen for the *jinghu* (high-range bowed lute) supporting the vocal line. The music continues in free rhythm.
- 1'57" Percussion returns.
- 2'23" Melodic ensemble returns. Note that the music follows a regular beat.
- 2'47" Vocalist returns as music continues with a regular beat.
- 2'57" The tempo gradually decreases.
- 3'14" Vocalist drops out and the melodic ensemble returns to a faster tempo with a regular beat.

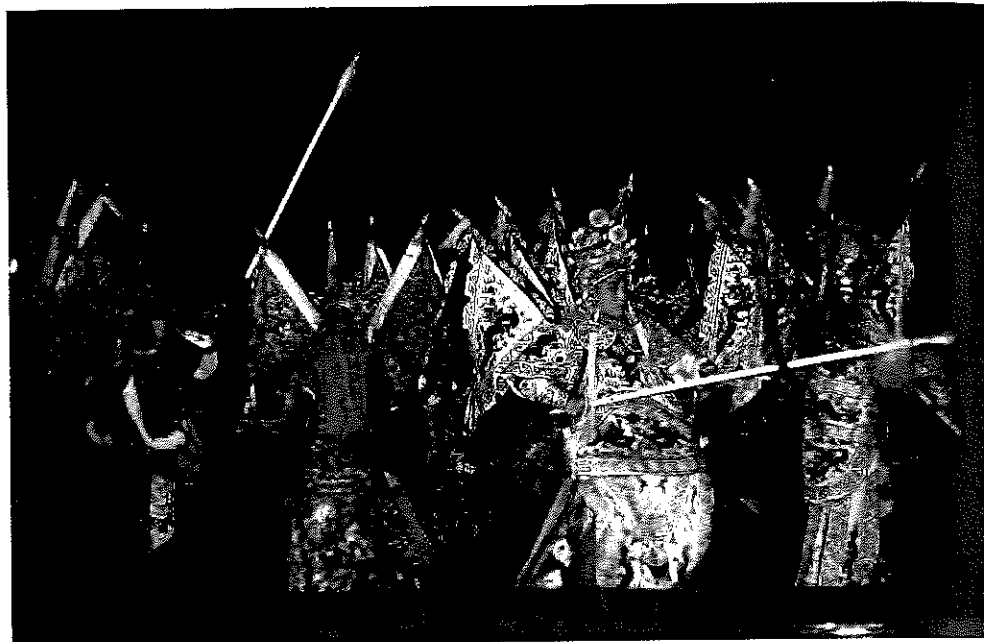
Source: "Tao Ma Tan (role), aria from *Mu Kezhai* (opera)," from the recording titled *The Chinese Opera: Arias from Eight Peking Opera*, Lyricord LLST 7212, n.d. Used by permission, Lyricord Discs Inc.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 1.18):** For theatrical performance such as this example, it is important to see the on stage activity. Watch a video recording of a Beijing Opera (*Mu Kezhai*, if possible) in its entirety.

**Cultural Considerations.** Typically, Asian theater traditions strive for symbolic rather than realistic action, depict individual characters as universal types, make music an integral part of the performance, and generally stylize all aspects of performance. *Jingju* perhaps develops these tendencies to a greater degree than any of the other local theater traditions found throughout China. Most of those use realistic, if stylized, scenery, but *jingju* does not. The props are minimal, normally only a table and two chairs. As in most Chinese theater traditions, *jingju* actors use a special stage language, though the comedians speak in Beijing dialect to indicate their low-class status. Although many of the local types of theater were—and continue to be—performed in a ritual context on a temporary stage within a temple facing the main god's altar, *jingju* is mostly performed in formal theaters, the other context for Chinese opera. In most local operas, players receive informal training within a troupe, but *jingju* can be studied formally in government-supported schools. Indeed, *jingju* has come to be the preferred way to represent traditional Chinese culture to the outside world; other kinds of Chinese theater are rarely encountered outside of China except within the confines of an overseas Chinese community.

The typical *jingju* performance places the music ensemble on stage left (the audience's right). Actors and actresses enter and exit from and to the left or right, using the table and two chairs to represent everything from a throne scene to a mountain battle site. An actor holding a stick with a simulated mane is understood to be riding a horse, and an official flanked by young actors holding cloth flags with wheels painted on them is understood to be riding in a chariot. For many years, men had to play women's roles, singing in falsetto (head) voice, because women were often banned from the stage as theater was seen as morally corrupting. Today, with such bans long gone, women not only play female roles but some-

Military scene with numerous generals



times play men's roles as well, while some men continue to impersonate women. Regardless of his or her gender, each performer specializes in a role type. There are four major role types with numerous subdivisions: (1) *sheng* (male roles), subdivided into young man, old man, and military male; (2) *dan* (female roles), which are similarly subdivided; (3) *jing* (painted face roles), which feature a facial pattern that symbolizes the person's character; and (4) *chou* (comedians), who are easily identified by the white patch in the middle of their faces.

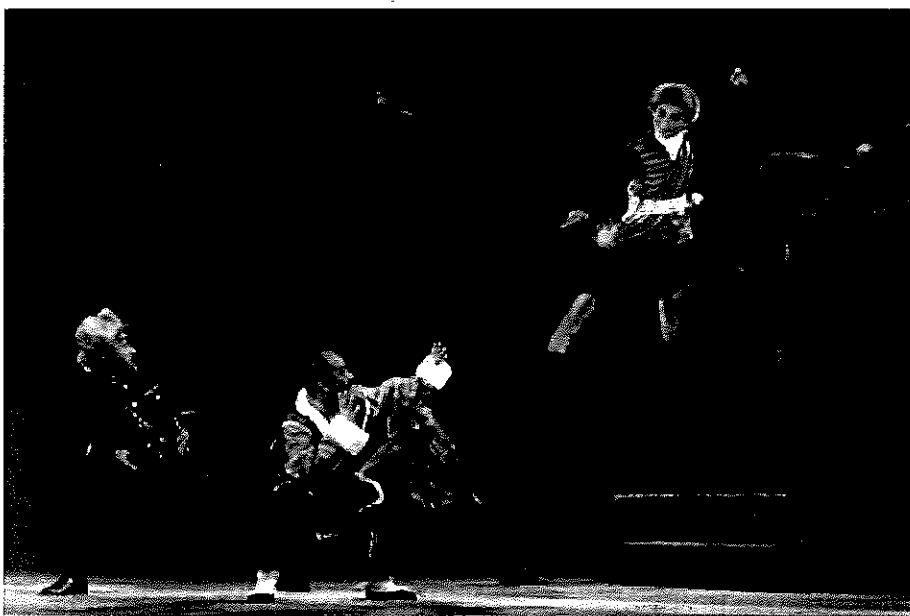
If you see a performance given in North America by a visiting troupe, chances are the singing portions will be shortened and the acrobatic sections lengthened, because it is commonly believed that Western audiences cannot tolerate the musical aspects of *jingju* well. But within North America there are also *jingju* clubs that give performances for connoisseurs who do not need rapid stage action to maintain interest.

**YANGBANXI**  
Literally, "model revolutionary [Beijing] Opera," the Chinese term for Beijing Operas infused with communist and nationalist political messages during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

#### Site 4: Revolutionary Beijing Opera (*Yangbanxi*)

**First Impressions.** Were you able to see a live performance of what is translated as "Revolutionary Peking (Beijing) Opera," (or *yangbanxi* in Chinese), you would be struck by a host of differences between this form and traditional *jingju* (Beijing Opera). First, in *yangbanxi* the actors and actresses wear modern costumes, including military uniforms. Second, the stage is much more realistic looking, because it features props and background scenery. Third, frequently some or even all of the instruments used are Western, and even when the instruments are all or mostly Chinese, the music is arranged and often uses Western harmony. Some of the elements of *yangbanxi* may be reminiscent of *jingju*, especially the use of percussion and the sound of most voices, but unlike the fanciful stories found in *jingju*, in *yangbanxi* the story clearly has political ramifications. Indeed, even without

knowing Chinese you can easily differentiate the "good guys" from the "bad guys." The former stand nobly tall, have determined looks, and are well lighted with healthy-looking skin, while the latter are often hunched, even cowering, have unhealthy greenish-looking skin, and are dimly lit. Invariably, the "good guys" are the followers of Chairman Mao, while the "bad guys" are variously the nationalist Chinese led by General Chiang Kai-Shek, the Japanese, evil Chinese landowners, or even, in one opera, American soldiers.



Scene from the Revolutionary Beijing Opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press)



The hero character in the Revolutionary Beijing Opera *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* challenges his oppressor (Peking: Foreign Languages Press)



Aural Analysis. During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), a number of “modernized” Peking Operas were made into political (i.e., “revolutionary”) works. Some of them, including our example, the 1967 work *On the Docks*, were held up as models to represent communist ideals. Although *On the Docks* was not the most satisfactory revolutionary opera in terms of its dramatic effectiveness, it was considered the most politically progressive of all. Mao’s wife insisted on a revision of the work in 1972, and this revised version is heard on the recording we have selected. Originally recorded by the “On the Docks” Group of the Peking Opera Troupe of Shanghai, the opera combines Western orchestral instruments with certain traditional Chinese instruments, including the *jinghu* fiddle and the percussion section.

The music of revolutionary opera, depending on the version, may preserve many or just a few sounds of traditional *jingju*; whatever the case, it is played from a completely written-out score. More like film music than old-style Chinese music, it creates dramatic shifts of mood. Those versions that were most modernized also use many Western orchestral instruments, and the scores include other Western features such as harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration. Excerpts from the one-page English synopsis included with the Chinese-language libretto give an idea of the opera’s political goals:

“On the Docks” depicts the spirit of patriotism and internationalism of the Chinese working class. The time is early summer in 1963. The place, a dock in Shanghai. FH, secretary of the Communist Party branch of a dockers’ brigade, and KC, are communist team leaders, who are leading the dockers in a rush job before the coming of a typhoon. They have to finish the loading of a big batch of rice seeds for shipment to Africa so as to support the anti-imperialist struggle of the Asian, African and Latin American peoples. [Wheat sacks left out must also be moved.]

During the rush young docker HH, who looks down on his work and is absent-minded, accidentally spills a sack of wheat. . . . Pretending to help sweep up the spilled wheat, C seizes the chance to pour the fiberglass in his dustbin into the wheat sack [and mixes it with the other sacks meant for export.]

FH, working closely with her mates, discovers the incident of the spilled sack. What happened? With this problem in mind, she re-reads the Communiqué of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. [Eventually] H awakens to his mistake and exposes C’s criminal activities. The enemy is completely revealed and the dockers fulfill their aid mission with flying colors.

Red flags fly over the rippling waters and in the morning sun the Shanghai dockers march on with revolutionary militancy toward the great goal of communism.”

Cultural Considerations. Music and politics have long been intertwined in China as they have sometimes been in the West as well. From the time of Kong Fuzi (Confucius, d. 479 B.C.E.), music was viewed as having ethical power—that is, the ability to influence people’s thinking. Right music led to right thinking and right behavior. Confucianism has continued to underlie much of Chinese culture to the present, requiring restraint, balance, and non-individuality. But China underwent severe disruption to its traditional society in the twentieth century. In the 1920s a civil war broke out between the communists under Mao Zedong and the nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek, which led, after the defeat of Chiang

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 1.19 (2'35")

## Chapter 7: Site 4

China: Revolutionary Beijing Opera (*Yangbanxi*)

Vocal: Male lead and supporting male vocal ensemble

Instruments: *Jinghu* (high-range bowed lute), *erhu* (mid-range bowed lute), Beijing opera percussion (cymbals, gongs, etc.). European-style orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion)

## TIME LISTENING FOCUS

- 0:00" Orchestral opening. Listen for the variety of "Western" instruments, such as violins, trumpets, flutes, harp, and so on.
- 0:09" Whistle sounds in correspondence with on stage actor's activities.
- 0:25" Actors shout.
- 0:32" Chinese melodic instruments enter along with the orchestra.
- 0:42" Spoken text followed by the vocal lead solo. Notice the full-bodied vocal timbre in contrast to the "pinched" nasal quality of the Beijing Opera vocal timbre.
- 1:14" Orchestral break.
- 1:19" Voice returns. Listen for the *jinghu* supporting the vocal line.
- 1:36" Orchestral break.
- 1:42" Voice returns.
- 1:51" Tempo slows and the orchestra follows the rhythmic phrasing of the vocal lead.
- 2:20" Actors shout again and Chinese percussion is heard prominently.
- 2:24" Spoken dialogue as example fades.

Source: Scene 1, "A Rush Shipment," from the recording titled *On the Docks: Modern Revolutionary Peking Opera*, performed by the "On the Docks" Group of the Peking Opera Troupe of Shanghai. China Record Company, M-958, n.d. Used by permission.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 1.19):** As locating video recordings of complete Revolutionary Opera performances is difficult, do some library or internet research to find photos and video excerpts from *On the Docks* and other *Yangbanxi* performances.

in 1949, to the founding of the People's Republic of China, while the nationalists fled to Taiwan where the Republic of China continues to this day.

Chairman Mao Zedong, leader of China's Communist Party from 1920 to 1976, understood the power of music and theater and used them as his most potent weapons both to fight his enemies and to influence and control his subjects. It was actually one of Mao's wives, former actress Jiang Qing, who supervised the politicization of *jingju*, primarily during the Cultural Revolution, a period of top-down revolution and chaos in China during which "traditional" culture, including Beijing Opera, was prohibited.

During the years from 1966 to 1976 the Chinese people were subjected to non-stop propaganda, much of it in the form of artistic productions (including music, dance, spoken theater, opera, art, and literature). Jiang Qing oversaw the creation of the "Eight Model Works": five Revolutionary Beijing Operas, two Revolutionary Ballets, and one Revolutionary Symphony. When President Richard Nixon surprised the world with his visit to China in 1972 at the height of the Cultural Revolution, he witnessed a performance of *The Red Detachment of Women*, one of the Revolutionary Ballets, an event that is central to John Adams's 1987 opera *Nixon in China*.

Besides the Revolutionary stage works, there was an abundance of new music written with socialist themes, mostly played by new sorts of ensembles (with or without vocalists), which used full orchestrations and harmony. These works varied from settings of Chairman Mao's words to music (e.g., the song "A Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party"), to music praising Chairman Mao (e.g., "Chairman Mao's Love for Us Is Deeper Than the Ocean"), to music calling for revolutionary action (e.g., "The People in Taiwan Long for Liberation") or extolling the communist work ethic (e.g., "Driving Tractors in Dazhai-Type Fields").

Because Chinese people heard so much revolutionary music and opera during the Cultural Revolution, you might be surprised to learn that record companies have released karaoke versions of the operas, and new VCD (video compact disc) versions of the films have been reissued to feed a nostalgic appreciation for the music of that period. The younger generations of Chinese, however, were nearly all born after the Cultural Revolution and only know the economically liberalized nation of today. For them, popular music is virtually the only music that they are exposed to, and as the government releases its grip on culture, there is more and more of it. Forty years ago Chinese traditional artists had to struggle against government controls to be heard, but now they struggle against the near total dominance of popular music, both local and imported from the West as well as from nearby countries.

## Explore More

### Popular Music in East Asia

Popular music in East Asia is steadily growing in its influence around the world. While few specific artists are known to most people outside the region, pop culture generally has embraced many innovations from the region, such as

Karaoke, Japanese *anime*, and martial arts films from Hong Kong, which have inspired modern-day action films in the United States and abroad. Teenagers and young adults from this region are as familiar with the icons of Western mainstream pop, such as Lady Gaga, as their Western counterparts, but add to their iPods music from indigenous

superstars, such as Hikaru Utada, Namie Amuro, Gackt, Ayu, Anita Mui, Faye Wong, and Jackie Chan, the latter being best known as an international movie star but also a pop music icon in East Asia. The majority of pop stars from East Asia are from Japan and Hong Kong, though others from Taiwan and Korea find regional fame as well.

Mainland China, however, has produced very few popular music stars due primarily to the communist political climate of the last half century, which largely discouraged popular styles as having a negative influence on society. The irony is that popular music throughout much of East Asia is considered to have originated in Shanghai during the 1920s as a mix of Chinese traditional music and American jazz called *shidaiqu* ("contemporary songs"). The most famous figure

associated with this early style was Zhou Xuan (1918–1957), a singer and movie actress who became popular during the late 1930s. After the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), however, the new communist government restricted this music as well as other outside influences coming from the West. Famous popular artists, such as Elvis Presley and The Beatles, were largely unknown on mainland China until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Elsewhere, however, the popularity of American and European music idols thrived, inspiring the various modern music styles of J-Pop (Japanese Pop), K-Pop (Korean Pop), M-Pop (Mandarin Pop), and C-Pop (Canto-Pop), as well as other East and Southeast Asian styles, including *Luk Thung* (Thailand) and *Dangdut* (Indonesia).

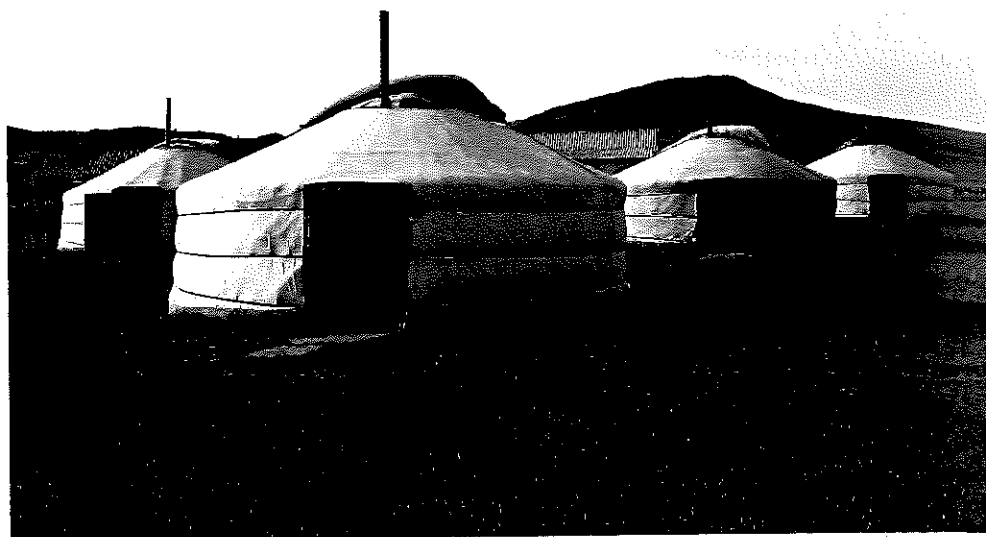
## Arrival: Mongolia

If there's a place that deserves the title "Big Sky Country," it would be landlocked Mongolia, tucked between China to the south and Russia to the north. Its open grassland landscapes—called *steppe*—and the great Gobi Desert, plus most days being cloudless, give visitors a feeling of great openness. With little arable land, sparse rainfall, and a short growing season, the Mongolians long ago learned to co-exist with their harsh climate, hot in the summer and extremely cold and windy in the winter. Originally a nomadic people dependent on their beloved horses, today only 30 per cent of the population of only 2.9 million maintain this life style. In spite of this tiny population, Mongolia is a country of great diversity, of numerous if little-known ethnic groups, and of religious complexity. While many Mongolians continue to practice their ancient form of shamanism—shamans being specialists in "traveling" to the land of the spirits—they long ago also embraced the Tibetan form of Buddhism, as seen in magnificent temples in urban areas.

A first-time visitor will be struck by Mongolia's apparent emptiness. Although the capital city, Ulaanbaatar (also spelled Ulan Bator), appears large, its population is only slightly more than half a million—nonetheless, the city is home to nearly 40 per cent of the country's population. With a land area nearly four times that of California and equal to that of Iran, Mongolia has one of the lowest density populations in the world. Mongolia's neighbors include Chinese Turks to the southwest, Russia to the northeast, and the Republic of Tuva (properly, Tyva) to the northwest; the latter, a member of the Russian Federation, is home to thriving musical traditions similar to those found in Mongolia. Despite Mongolia's historically small population, in the twelfth century the Mongol civilization became extremely powerful, and the armies of the Khans (emperors), particularly Chinggis (Genghis) Khan (d. 1227), subdued not only China during the Yuan Dynasty (1260–1227), but a vast area stretching from Korea to the Black Sea and including parts of Southeast Asia. When



Mongolian  
round canvas  
homes (*yurt*)  
(Shutterstock)



Italian adventurer Marco Polo visited China in the late thirteenth century, his host was the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan, grandson of Chinggis.

The capital city of Mongolia is hardly a haven for traditional culture; instead, it reflects the Soviet influence Mongolia came under after achieving independence from China in 1921. The city's architecture looks far more Soviet than Mongolian, and it was under Soviet influence that Mongolians developed their "folkloric troupes" to represent Mongolian culture to the outside world, as well as visitors.

Originally, much of Mongolia's music had spiritual and religious significance, because music was often considered a form of communication between the worlds of humans and spirits. Under communism, however, most musical traditions were secularized and put on the stage. Music that had been—and mostly continues to be—passed down orally has also been harnessed by the European-style music conservatories. It is "overtone singing" that has brought Mongolian music to world attention. While overtone singing is both important and distinctive, the country's most typical form of music is actually the *urtin duu*, the "long songs" accompanied by Mongolia's most distinctive instrument, a trapezoid-bodied, long-necked bowed lute called the *morin khuur*. Where the overtone singing lacks lyrics, the long songs retell the culture's great stories and history as well as describe the natural environment; some say that these "sing the landscape."

#### OVERTONE

One of the ascending group of tones that form the harmonic series derived from the fundamental pitch.

### Site 5: Mongolian *Urtin Duu* (Long Song) with *Khöömei* (Overtone or "Throat" Singing)

First Impressions. It is not the instrument that attracts our attention—that is clearly a bowed lute—or the female's singing but rather the other performer's singing, if that is the right term.

Some listeners describe these sounds as unearthly and find them "haunting." Some observers say it resembles whistling and wonder how such sounds are produced. Additionally many ask what might have inspired a culture to produce such sounds.

**Aural Analysis.** Traditional Mongolian life was and, for many, continues to be lived in nature and among one's flocks of sheep and goats. Without horses, Mongolians would have no way to travel or herd their flocks, and thus it is not surprising that they would enshrine the horse on their principal bowed lute, the *morin khuur* which, because of the carved horse-head at the top is translated as "horse-head fiddle." This long-necked fiddle, with two silk strings and a separate bow, is normally played by a seated male, with the body of the instrument resting on his knee and the neck resting against his shoulder. The song they are performing, *Sünder Agula* (Sünder Mountain), alludes to the sacred nature of mountains in old Mongolian society. It comes from a song genre called *Urün duu* or "long songs" and originated in western Mongolia. In addition to the "normal" singing by a female, a male performs regular singing while another sings with what sounds like a whistle. It is this kind of vocal production that has attracted so much attention to Mongolia over the past thirty or so years.



Mongolian "throat" singer, Ts. Sengedorj, performs in full costume (Jack Vartoogian/ FrontRowPhotos)



Two Mongolian musicians play the *morin khuur* (two-stringed, "horse-head" fiddle) (Shutterstock)



**KHÖÖMEI**  
Throat or overtone  
singing from  
Mongolia.

The Mongolian term for this type of singing is *khöömei* (also romanized as *höömii*), while in English it is called *throat-singing* (a somewhat odd label, because all singing takes place in the throat) or *overtone singing*. What makes this singing so distinctive is the way in which the singer manipulates what are called *overtones*. Any tone or pitch, except perhaps one generated electronically, consists of a fundamental and a series of harmonics, called *overtones* or *partials*. The timbre of a given tone is determined by which overtones are emphasized—a function of how the fundamental was produced (e.g., by a double reed, a vibrating string, buzzing lips, etc.)—and by the relative weakness or strength of the various overtones. A tone in which the lower overtones are emphasized will likely sound “warm,” whereas one in which the upper overtones are more prominent will sound “bright,” “harsh,” or perhaps “hollow.”

In overtone singing, the performer—formerly only male, now female as well—produces, usually with significant pressure on the glottis (a part of the vocal cords), a fundamental and, by shaping the mouth cavity, brings out different patterns of overtones. A series of well-controlled, changing overtones produces an actual melody over a drone. Highly skilled singers can even produce both the lower melody and the overtone melody simultaneously, as heard in this track.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.1 (2'39")

### Chapter 7: Site 5

### Mongolia: *Urtin duu* (Long song) with *khöömei* (overtone or throat singing)

Voices: Single female, single male, male also performing overtone singing  
Instrument: *Morin khuur* (horse-head fiddle)

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	<i>Morin khuur</i> begins.
0'07"	<i>Khöömei</i> vocalist enters. Listen for the deep fundamental drone tone along with the overtone singing. Note that the overtone melody follows the melodic line of the fiddle.
0'20"	Female vocalist enters as <i>khöömei</i> vocalist stops. Note that the singer and instrumentalist follow the same melodic line.
1'16"	<i>Khöömei</i> vocalist joins the singer and instrumentalist.
1'30"	Male vocalist enters as the <i>khöömei</i> and female vocalists stop. Note again the singer and instrumentalist follow the same melodic line.
2'27"	<i>Khöömei</i> vocalist joins the singer and instrumentalist.

Source: “Urtin duu Sinder Mountain” from *Mongolia: Living Music of the Steppes/ Instrumental Music and Song of Mongolia*, Multicultural Media, MCM 3001 (1997). Used with permission.



**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.1):** Sing a deep drone pitch and change the shape of your mouth to create different timbres. Listen for the subtle changes in overtones and try to amplify these over the fundamental sung pitch.

Cultural Considerations. Among “world music” enthusiasts little has garnered as much attention in recent years as “throat-singing,” also called “overtone singing.” While a similar form of singing found in the nearby Republic of Tuva has perhaps attracted a greater following in the West in recent years, Mongolian overtone singing is certainly just as striking. Singers in other areas of the world, including Altai, Khakassia, the Chukchi Peninsula, Tibet, Japan’s Hokkaido (now extinct), Sardinia in the Mediterranean as well as the Inuit of Alaska, practice various forms of overtone singing, but less prominently than in Mongolia. Few outsiders will have the opportunity to hear Mongolian overtone singing in its original context—performed in a *yurt* (round tent) with singers surrounded by family and friends. Nonetheless, many recordings of overtone singing exist, sometimes even combining it with various forms of art and popular music. American musician Bela Fleck, for example, has collaborated with Mongolian throat singer Kongar-Ol Ondar, and under the indirect influence of German avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, created an extended work titled *Stimmung* in 1968, which features overtone singing.

In Mongolia this unique style of singing is closely tied to the shamanistic/animistic beliefs still held by many Mongolians. The voice is meant to imitate the sounds of nature, attempting to duplicate the rich timbres of natural phenomena such as the swirling wind or rushing water. Mountains, rivers, and animals are believed to contain a spiritual energy that is manifested not only physically but sonically as well. Echoes reflected from a cliff, for example, are said to be infused with spiritual power. Overtone singers believe they can assimilate this power by recreating such sounds. Some speculate that overtone singing originated from the efforts of herders to imitate animal sounds when trying to rescue newborn animals when unable to nurse or when rejected by the mother. Sometimes herders soothed or coaxed their animals with their overtone singing. From these functions it is believed that herders honed their abilities until this form of singing became part of the musical traditions of Mongolia.

## Arrival: Korea

Although the Korean language is unrelated to the languages of its closest neighbors, China and Japan, the fact that it is partially written in Chinese characters shows that early in its history Korea absorbed many aspects of China’s civilization. Korea also accepted Confucian teachings and philosophy, the emperor system, Chinese Buddhism and Daoism, and many of China’s instruments and musical types.

Sandwiched between China and Japan, Korea has suffered repeatedly as each of these kingdoms expanded. From 1910 to 1945 Korea was a colony of Japan. Following World War II, Korea found itself as the battleground in a struggle between China and the West; this led to a kind of internationalized civil war, which ended with an armistice in 1952. Today, the Korean peninsula remains divided into two countries—North Korea and South Korea.



Altogether, the Korean peninsula is only the size of the United Kingdom. While North Korea is the larger of the two countries, it has less than half of South Korea's population. The two nations are unequal in many other ways as well: the South is a modern, developed, democratic nation that manufactures goods for the entire world, whereas in the North, currently under the strict control of a quixotic ruler Kim Jong-Il, malnutrition and starvation stemming both from government policies and natural disasters are common. Culturally speaking, both countries have departed from the old Korean traditions, the North because of its peculiar form of communism, the South because of modernization. Nonetheless, in some major cities, such as Seoul, the capital of South Korea, "traditional" culture continues to flourish in the "museums" of certain government-sponsored institutions.

Just as Korean cuisine has attained little prominence in the West, Korean music has also struggled to be appreciated, even within Korea; for many Westerners both the food and the music can be described as "acquired tastes," the spiciness of Korean food being likened to the sonic spiciness of Korean music. From the first century onward Korea absorbed much Chinese musical culture, especially court and ritual musics, much of which was essentially preserved through the centuries, even as music in China continued to change. As a consequence, Korea maintains one of the oldest continuously living music traditions in the world, the Confucian ritual music called *a-ak*. These hymns to the ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius, are still sung once a year on his birthday (September 27). The Chinese originals first had to undergo change to accommodate Korean tastes. Similarly, Korean court music, preserved today by several cultural institutions, remains extremely archaic.

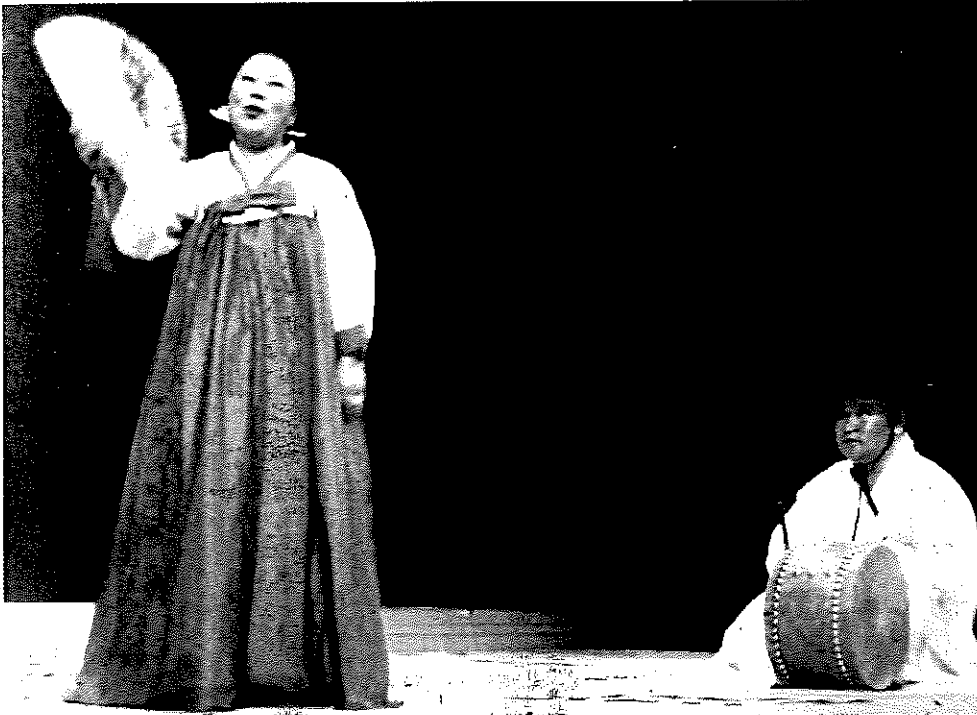
In the face of the politically induced stresses of the last century, particularly the Japanese occupation (1910–1945), World War II, the Korean War, and the Korean Peninsula's division into north and south, traditional forms of music have struggled to survive. South Korea has preserved some forms in educational and cultural institutions, where they are still taught and performed as museum pieces, while North Korea has discarded most vestiges of tradition in favor of newly created and highly politicized forms of music, inspired by the old Soviet "Socialist Realism," an approach that requires all art to have political ramifications and inspire the people to uphold state policies.

South Korea nonetheless retains a rich repertory consisting of solo, semi-improvised instrumental music (called *sanjo*), ensemble music, narrative and lyrical song, theatrical music, "farmer's band music," and the now widely known folk-derived percussion music called *samul-nori*. Although there are exceptions, China's instrumental timbres tend to be bright and clear, while those of Korea might be described as "rough," "fuzzy," and "wavering" because of the strong use of vibrato. While China's music is clearly based on tunes, Korea's does not generally sound tuneful to foreign ears; indeed, when Korean ensembles play together, some listener's have trouble hearing the instrumental parts as even being related to each other. Finally, ornamentation in Korean music tends to come unevenly in sudden spurts.

## Site 6: *P'ansori* Narrative

**P'ANSORI**  
Korean narrative  
vocal performance  
style, featuring  
epic-length stories.

First Impressions. *P'ansori* is a passionate music. The vocalist begins with a cathartic wail, so powerful that it strains the limits of the recording equipment. Accompanied by seemingly random drumbeats, she employs a great variety of vocal techniques, from near whispers to



Korean *p'ansori* (narrative) performers, the singer on the left, the *puk* barrel drummer on the right (Embassy of Korea)

speaking to singing and raspy shouting. A noticeable wide vibrato heightens the emotion, encouraging a highly evocative and dramatic performance. Even while the language is a barrier to non-native speakers, the fierceness with which *p'ansori* performers display their craft attracts loyal followers around the world.

**Aural Analysis.** *P'ansori* is one of Asia's greatest narrative forms and certainly among the most dramatic. Although considered a form of "folk" music, *p'ansori* requires extensive training, a prodigious memory, and incredible physical strength and vocal endurance. Today singers perform only five stories, each potentially lasting several hours, but in the distant past there were as many as twelve. Our example provides an excerpt from one of the five, *Ch'un-Hyang-Ka*, the story of a young woman whose name means "Spring Fragrance." As with many classical stories from East Asia, the plot revolves around a young student and his lover; in this case, the student is named Li Mongnyong and his lover is called Ch'un-Hyang. Ch'un-Hyang's mother is a *kisaeng*—that is, a professional singer and entertainer—but does not want her daughter to follow in her footsteps. The two lovers are secretly married before Li Mongnyong departs for Seoul to begin the classical studies that will hopefully lead to a position of authority in the government. After many years as an official, he returns to his hometown disguised as a beggar to check on his wife and discovers that she and her mother have suffered greatly during his absence. He then reveals his true identity. Some have interpreted the story as a critique of feudalism and its abuses.

The story is realized by two performers, a vocalist—in this case a respected and elderly female master—and a drummer. The drum used is the *puk*, a shallow barrel drum with two tacked heads. Held vertically by the drummer, he strikes the right head with a stick and the

Drummer playing  
*puk* drum to  
accompany  
*p'ansori* (narrative)  
(Embassy of Korea)



left hand with his hand, occasionally calling out praise or encouragement to the singer. Both performers have a degree of freedom to improvise, limited within strict conventions. The vocalist's performance is governed by a modal system that provides an appropriate scale, melodic motives, and conventional ways to express emotions. The drummer's part is based on fixed cyclic patterns of drumbeats, but because the cycle is rather long in duration and the drumbeats are not continuous, the cycle may have a random feel to non-connoisseurs.

The range of vocal timbres is exceptionally rich, as the vocalist varies from speaking to declamation to song, to raspy, tense bursts of sound. The vocal range is unusually wide. Different pitches (depending on the particular scale/mode) have different degrees and kinds of vibrato, a distinctive feature of *p'ansori* performance. Connoisseurs of this music recognize the distinctions in vibrato, which gives them a greater appreciation of the performer's ability. The intensity of expression throughout a performance parallels the emotional intensity of the story. Indeed, emotional intensity is characteristic of *p'ansori* and of Korean music in general, despite the restraint and balance otherwise demanded by Confucian aesthetics.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.2 (2'11")

## Chapter 7: Site 6

Korea: *P'ansori* Narrative

Vocal: Single female

Instruments: *Puk* (shallow barrel drum)

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	Example fades in with vocalist and accompanying drum.
0'08"	Listen for the quiet declamations of the percussionist.
0'16"	Note how the descending melodic contour of the vocalist includes little vibrato in this phrase.
0'22"	Now listen for the heavy use of vibrato in the voice to contrast with the preceding phrase. Pay attention to such variations in the vibrato throughout the performance.
0'39"	Listen for the strong, raspy quality of the vocal timbre at the start of this phrase.
0'49"	Listen for the timbre heard when the stick strikes the drum's face, and compare this with the sound made when it strikes the drum's side (0'55") or strikes simultaneously with the hand (1'04").
1'08"	Vocalist sings with falsetto.
1'27"	Vocalist shifts to spoken dialogue.
1'57"	Vocalist transitions back to sung text.

Source: "P'ansori, Ch'un-Hyang-Ka, Song of Spring Fragrance," sung by Mme. Pak Chowol with drum accompaniment by Han Ilsoo, and recorded by John Levy, from the recording titled *Korean Social and Folk Music*, Lyrichord LLST 7211, n.d. Used by permission, Lyrichord Discs Inc.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.2):** Sing a comfortable pitch and attempt to vary the level of vibrato from none to very wide and back again.

**Cultural Considerations.** Before 1910, when Korea was still a kingdom, certain music traditions were maintained by the court while others were practiced by ordinary people of the villages. A tremendous variety of instrumental and vocal music existed, performed in ritual contexts, on official occasions, during calendric festivals, and for entertainment. Many traditions were prohibited or lost during the twentieth century, because of the Japanese occupation and especially because of the Korean War and the consequent division of Korea. After 1952, as South Korea modernized into one of the "Asian Tigers" and North Korea slid into despair under Kim Il-Sung's "cult of personality"-style rule, traditional music struggled

to survive. In the North, music was harnessed for state purposes under the banner of "socialist realism," and was both "modernized" and turned into propaganda. In the South, the government made the decision to preserve rapidly dying cultural traditions by keeping them living aural museums. Traditional ways of life were "preserved"—really reconstructed—in designated "ethnographic" villages where time stands still both politically and technologically. Music, dance, and theater are similarly preserved in rather rigid forms within certain government-sponsored cultural institutions and the educational system. Independently, however, modern Korean artists have created completely new forms of expression derived from tradition, but for the most part, the traditional and the modern are kept separated.

*P'ansori* is one of the types of music that has been preserved through government support. Its storytellers were once found amidst festival events, where their voices had to compete with other activities. These wandering bards traveled the countryside telling their tales. Some found favor with aristocratic audiences, who continually debated over the artistic value of these talented but lower-class performers. *P'ansori* performers were an "endangered species" by the middle years of the twentieth century, until 1964, when the Ministry of Culture and Information designated several performers as "holders of artistry of intangible cultural assets." Since that time *p'ansori* has been found primarily on concert stages in an institutionalized setting along with other traditional Korean arts, such as *sanjo*.

A visitor to South Korea can still hear and see the most formal of ritual musics, the most refined of vocal and instrumental genres, and even "folk song," all alive but now unchanging. These are studied in many cases with designated masters—living national treasures—the nation's most valued culture-bearers. Unusual as this practice of keeping archaic forms of music alive artificially may seem from a Western viewpoint, it reflects a decision that traditional Korean music is worth preserving as an expression of what is most essential and defining in the Korean soul.

While much of Korean musical culture came originally from China, most of this imported Chinese culture was modified to suit the nature and personality of Korea. For example, the Chinese zither (*zheng*), formerly having sixteen strings but now expanded to twenty-one, is played with plectra (originally finger nails), giving it a crisp, clean timbre. The Korean equivalent, the *kayagum*, has only twelve strings, but they are thicker and played with the fleshy part of the fingers, giving the music a more diffused timbre. There are also, however, aspects of Korean musical practice that are not derived from China, such as the Korean preference for 6/8 and 9/8 meters, this being exceptional not just in East Asia but in all of Asia. These meters give Korean music a lilting rhythmic quality not heard elsewhere.

Korean musicians have built new kinds of music while keeping the old alive. Today one finds orchestras of traditional instruments, the mixing of Korean and Western instruments, and various kinds of popular music that sound more or less Korean. Most striking of all, however, is a new genre that has received worldwide attention, *samul-nori*. Derived from the old-time "farmer's band music," *samul-nori*, which means "four instruments playing," was created in 1978 by four musicians in Seoul who played large and small gongs (*ching* and *kwaengwari*), an hourglass-shaped drum (*changgo*), and a barrel drum (*puk*), performing mostly fixed compositions with amazing agility and passion. During the 1980s and especially the 1990s, other groups expanded *samul-nori* to include more and larger drums, creating one of the most dramatic, energetic, and appealing new genres in the world. Because *samul-nori* has grabbed the attention of foreigners as no other Korean music had before, even



the government is now promoting it as an expression of Korean identity in spite of the music's newness.

## Arrival: Japan

Because Japan is an island nation, consisting of four main islands (from north to south, Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu), plus the Ryukyu chain, land and resources are severely limited. With nearly 80 percent of the land being too steep for housing and difficult for farming, the Japanese have been forced to use their land to extreme efficiency. In a country slightly smaller than California but with a population nearly four times as large, the Japanese also have to be tolerant of each other due to such crowded conditions. Additionally, Japan's position on major geological faults brings devastating earthquakes. These the Japanese have learned to defeat structurally, but as the 9.0 earthquake of March 2011 showed, any resulting tsunamis can be far more devastating. Although profoundly influenced by Chinese civilization, Japan (like Korea) modified the culture imported from China to suit its own needs and to express its individualism. Also like Korea, Japan has tended to preserve its traditional music, theater, and dance separately from new developments, offering visitors the opportunity to experience archaic forms much as they were hundreds of years ago.

Just as Japan itself is compact, its traditional arts are few and well defined. Japan's court music and court dance, called *gagaku* and *bugaku* respectively, are among the oldest continuously living musical genres on the earth; to be appreciated properly, they are best experienced live and in their original context. Three forms of traditional theater are particularly striking: the ancient *noh*, the more recent *kabuki*, and the incredible puppet theater known as *bunraku* with each puppet's three human manipulators in plain sight. Three instruments—the *koto* (zither), the *shakuhachi* (flute), and *shamisen* (plucked lute)—are essential in Japanese music. When they play together with a vocalist, they comprise Japan's best-known chamber music, called *sankyoku*, meaning "three instruments." Other essential types of traditional music include folksong, festival and dance music, and Buddhist chant, as well as the globally popular *taiko* drum ensembles originally associated with Shinto ritual practices.

Japan's music, like its arts generally, is best understood in terms of Japanese specialist William Malm's well-known aphorism, "maximum effect from minimum means." Whereas much Chinese and some Korean musics can sound continuously "busy," Japanese music prefers minimal activity and makes silence an integral part of the soundscape. This sparseness, together with the use of strongly articulated notes, requires calm and attentive listening on the listener's part. In Japan, musical instruments are treated as extremely refined, artistic objects and remain unusually expensive, even student models. Indeed, most kinds of Japanese performance, including performances of folksongs or music for *bon* (festive) dancing, are quite formal, even ritualized.

Whereas Chinese tunes are continually rearranged and are embellished freely, Japanese music tends to be played with greater consistency. Musical spontaneity is not characteristic; in fact, some Japanese instrumental music is notated exactly, even down to the ornamentation. In short, whereas flexibility and casualness are characteristic of Chinese music, Japanese music is characterized more by fixedness and great refinement of detail.



### GAGAKU

A Confucian-derived ritual court ensemble from Japan; literally, "elegant music."

### SANKYOKU

A Japanese chamber ensemble, consisting of voice, *koto* (zither), *shakuhachi* (flute), and *shamisen* (lute).





(left) The Japanese *koto* zither with thirteen strings



(right) The Japanese *shamisen* lute

### Site 7: *Sankyoku* Instrumental Chamber Music

*First Impressions.* A small group of instruments—two plucked and sounding percussive, one blown and sounding sustained—begins in a deliberate tempo which expresses a calmness in contrast to modern urban lives, particularly those of crowded and bustling Tokyo, where the underground trains can become so overwhelmed as to require “pushers” to get all the people inside and allow the doors to close. This music has an even temperament and restraint that seems almost without emotion. While the instruments are clearly together, their relationships are anything but simple, one of them sometimes seeming to wander off the main path for brief periods.

*Aural Analysis.* *Sankyoku*, which means “three instruments,” elegantly embodies everything that Japanese musicians value in their music. Each instrument is primary in Japanese culture: *koto* (zither), *shamisen* (lute), and *shakuhachi* (vertical flute). The *shakuhachi*, whose name expresses its length in a Japanese measurement system, is a vertically held bamboo flute of varying length—21 inches/54 cm being average. Traditional models have four topside finger holes and one rear thumb hole, but some models have seven or nine holes now. The upper end is cut at an angle, creating a sharp edge over which the player splits the air and sets the air column in vibration. Players can produce vibrato by moving their head. The *koto* is a board zither of paulownia wood 70 inches (178 cm) long with ivory or plastic moveable



The Japanese *shakuhachi* with notation spread before him (Jack Vartoogian/FrontRowPhotos)

bridges supporting thirteen strings, formerly of twisted silk but now usually of nylon. Players pluck the strings using large ivory or plastic picks attached to the right hand's thumb and first and second fingers with a leather band, and use the left hand to press strings to create pitches in addition to the pentatonic scale to which the strings are tuned. The *shamisen* is a plucked lute with a relatively long neck of varying length and a square wooden body covered with white catskin. A broad plastic or ivory bridge supports three strings of silk or nylon. The player holds the instrument at an angle (similar to a guitar) and plucks the strings with a large plastic or ivory plectrum resembling an ice scraper called a *bachi*. When these three instruments play together as an ensemble, with or without singing provided by either the *koto* or *shamisen* player, the result is *sankyoku*. During the earlier period of *sankyoku* history, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ensemble used a four-stringed bowed lute called *kokyū* that resembles a *shamisen* played with a bow, but during the nineteenth century the *shakuhachi* replaced the now-rare *kokyū*.

Although *sankyoku* music may sound somewhat free, there is virtually no improvisation in Japanese music, and most music is fully notated in various systems peculiar to each instrument. All three players (and voice when present—which it is not in this example) perform the same basic melody, but each instrument's idiomatic version is distinct, based on the characteristics of the instrument's style. While the *koto* and *shamisen* are plucked and their sounds decay quickly, requiring many reiterations in order to sustain a pitch, the *shakuhachi*'s style is continuous and flowing. Although the two plucked instruments have similar timbres, you can hear the differences clearly in the "call-and-response" passages.

The track's title is *Keshi no Hana* meaning "The Poppy Flower," a song originally composed in the early nineteenth century for *shamisen* by Kikuoka Kengyo (1792–1847), with the *koto* part added by Matsuzaki Kengyo (1824–1871), and the third part for *shakuhachi* by an unknown composer. The title alludes to the poetry associated with this instrumental version, which describes a poppy flower but as a simile for a beautiful courtesan: "How pretty is the poppy flower here in my hand. When plucked its fragrance is unworldly. But how pitiful once the petals have fallen."

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.3 (4'32")

## Chapter 7: Site 7

Japan: *Sankyoku* (Instrumental Chamber Music)

Instrument: *Shakuhachi* (vertical flute), *koto* (plucked zither), *shamisen* (plucked lute)

## TIME LISTENING FOCUS

- 0'00"** *Shakuhachi*, *koto* then *shamisen* enter. Listen to alternation between *koto* (left channel) and *shamisen* (right channel) using stereo headphones. Note the relative slow tempo and use of a pentatonic scale.
- 0'07"** Note the *shamisen* timbre playing a lower melodic range.
- 0'21"** Melodic line alternates between the *shakuhachi/koto* pair and *shamisen*.
- 0'27"** Note the increase in tempo.
- 0'50"** *Shamisen* is highlighted followed by the melodic line alternating between *shakuhachi/koto* pair and *shamisen*.
- 1'14"** Note a brief increase in rhythmic density to build tension.
- 1'53"** Listen for the *koto* glissando (*kararin*).
- 2'01"** Tempo slows briefly as form transitions to next section at previous tempo with increased rhythmic density. Listen for variations of melodic content heard in the previous section.
- 4'03"** Tempo slows briefly as form transitions to final section.
- 4'09"** Closing section begins with new melodic material at higher rhythmic density and faster tempo.
- 4'23"** Tempo slows for final phrase.

Source: "Keshi no hana" from *Japanese Shamisen/Chamber Music (Jiuta) with Koto and Shakuhachi*, Lyricord Archive Series, LAS 7209, 2010.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.3):** Determine the pitches of the scale used in this example using a keyboard/piano. Transcribe the melodic line of each instrument using either numeral or staff notation.

Cultural Considerations. China's "silk and bamboo" chamber ensembles are notable for their casual but "busy" sounding melodic decoration, but the obvious differences between, for example, *Jiangnan* "silk and bamboo" music (Chapter 7, Site 2) and this example of Japanese *sankyoku* chamber music demonstrates most of the fundamental differences between the Chinese and Japanese aesthetics. In contrast to dense number of notes in Chinese music, Japanese music minimizes the notes, but making each one count, an example of William Malm's maxim quoted above. Where most Chinese ensemble music presents the melody in lock-step among the instruments, here the relationships are much less obvious, made complex by both differences in idiom and timing; it would be much more difficult here than in China to extract a "generic" form of the melody. Instead, it is better to think of each instrument's part as a distinct manifestation of the same melody.

Japanese chamber music is an art celebrated and enjoyed by small groups of connoisseurs in small spaces rather than by crowds in a large hall. *Sankyoku* could perhaps be compared to other well-known Japanese arts such as calligraphy; *bonsai* (the art of growing trees in miniature form), *kirigami* (paper cutting and folding), and the wearing of the *kimono* (formal dress). Where Chinese chamber music is played casually by amateurs in a clublike setting, with friends sitting around smoking, drinking tea, and talking, Japanese chamber music performance is highly formal, even ritualistic in behavior, and the audience is equally formal. Where Chinese instruments are relatively inexpensive and handled casually, Japanese instruments are highly refined in form and finish, expensive, and handled as revered art objects.

## Explore More

### Komuso

Even in Japan the sight of someone wandering around town dressed in robes, wearing a basket over his head, and playing *shakuhachi* flute had to attract notice. That this person was a spy justifiably gives rise to an obvious question: how secret can a spy be with a basket over his head? Delving into the history of the *komuso* only deepens the mystery, starting with their oxymoronic descriptor as "lay-priest." Far from being religious men, they were former *samurai* warriors who had lost their masters during the upheavals and civil wars of the late sixteenth century. Their duty was to roam the streets to observe what the citizens were doing and saying and report back to the authorities, but because their headquarters was at a former Buddhist temple, many believed they were somehow priests; hence, the idea of the "lay-priest." The *shakuhachi* was not just a large tube of sturdy bamboo but



A Japanese *Komuso* playing the *shakuhachi* (Thomas Holton/Getty Images)

its lower end was thick and rough from being part of the bamboo root. If need be, the *komuso* could defend themselves by striking opponents with the instrument's lower end. When not having to fight however—most of the time—they actually played the *shakuhachi*, developing a growing body of compositions. After being disbanded in the mid-nineteenth

century, when the stigma of violence was separated from the instrument, the *komuso* promoted what came to be one of Japan's most treasured repertoires. After that it was embraced by *sankyoku* musicians and came to replace the *kokyū* bowed lute.

One of the non-musical influences on *sankyoku*, as well as — most Japanese music, is *Zen* Buddhism, a form of Buddhism derived from the Chinese *Chan* and brought to Japan in the twelfth century. Where some Buddhist sects emphasized the study of the scriptures, resulting in much intellectualizing, *Chan/Zen* emphasized clearing one's mind through meditation in order to reach enlightenment. Thus, in the *Zen* aesthetic, emptiness is valued over busyness, plain white space over decorated space, and in music, silence over continuous sound. *Zen* Buddhism and the music influenced by it were the inspirations for the so-called "Minimalist" movement in Western art, which rose to prominence during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that time many European and American artists had a fascination for Japanese art and music, one aspect of a period filled with a broad range of interests in the non-Western world.

### Site 8: *Kabuki* Theater

**KABUKI**  
Popular music theater form developed for Japan's middle class in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

**First Impressions.** In comparison to Western theatrical genres, the sound of *kabuki* is much more subdued. Twangy plucked lutes, a single flute, and a collection of small drums accompany a solitary storyteller as the action unfolds on stage. No fiddles or brash trumpets or reeds, no crashing cymbals or heavy drums—this music is refined and deliberate. Perhaps most easy to recognize are the "yo" and "ho" calls of the drummers at the transition from vocal to instrumental sections, a distinctive feature of *kabuki* and Japanese *noh* drama.



Fight scene in a Japanese *kabuki* performance

*Kabuki* musicians who accompany *nagauta* songs: (back row left to right) singers, *shamisen* (lute) players; (front row) *taiko* (drum), *o-tsuzumi* (side-held drum), *ko-tsuzumi* (shoulder-held drum), and *nokan* (transverse flute) (Jack Vartoogian/ FrontRowPhotos)



*Chōbo* narrators (left) and *shamisen* players accompany the story in a Japanese *kabuki* performance (Jack Vartoogian/ FrontRowPhotos)



**Aural Analysis.** When listening to an audio recording of a music-theater work, it can be difficult to make sense of the music because one cannot see how it relates to the dramatic action. *Kabuki*, a theater type developed in Japan during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a newly rising middle class of business people coalesced in the city of Edo (now called Tokyo), has considerably more action and visual interest than Japan's earlier and more reserved theater, *noh*. *Noh* features slow-moving actors behind masks playing eternal human types to the minimalist accompaniment of three drums and a horizontal flute. *Kabuki* kept the instruments used in *noh* but added plucked lutes; sound-effects instruments (such as wood blocks, cymbals, and scrapers), and a greater variety of vocal sounds.

Our example features various forms of theatrical speech, and several types of instruments. First among the instruments heard is a group of long-necked plucked lutes called *shamisen*. The *shamisen's* square resonator body is covered with catskin that supports a bridge carrying three strings from the bottom up the fretless neck to the top end. Because players use a large ivory (or plastic) pick, the resonator skin has an additional patch around the area where strings are plucked for its protection. The large picks give the instrument its strongly percussive timbre. Three drums then begin to punctuate the *shamisen's* sound: an hourglass-shaped drum called *o-tuzumi*, which is held at the hip; a smaller version of the



same drum, called *ko-tuzumi*, which is held on the shoulder; and a small barrel-shaped drum called *taiko*, which is played with two sticks. Next, a horizontal bamboo flute called *nokan* joins the ensemble. Lastly, one of the sound-effects instruments, a small metal gong, joins in. Throughout you hear occasional calls of “yo” and “ho.” These surprising elements are drummers’ calls and are considered part of the audible pattern of drumming. The total effect is one of diverse, unblended sounds that together make *kabuki* a unique sonic world.

As with much Japanese music, tonal subtleties abound, especially because of the frequent tone-bending heard in the *shamisen* and *nokan* to a lesser degree. Although each part seems to operate in its own world, all work together to achieve a continually changing flow of tension, relaxation, movement, and meaning. Underpinning this are the standard drum patterns, but their minimal number of beats makes perception of a regular downbeat or meter a challenge.

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.4 (1'42")

## Chapter 7: Site 8

Japan: *Kabuki* Theater

Vocals: Single male vocal lead, briefly heard male vocal ensemble

Instruments: *Shamisen* (plucked lute), *nokan* (flute), *o-tuzumi* (hourglass-shaped drum), *ko-tuzumi* (smaller hourglass-shaped shoulder drum), *taiko* (barrel-shaped drum), *atari-gane* (small gong)

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	<i>Shamisen</i> (plucked lute) begins performance, followed by male vocalist.
0'19"	Vocal group utters non-lexical declamation to anticipate instrumental section.
0'21"	Remaining instruments enter. The <i>nokan</i> (flute) is the aural focus as the other instruments play supporting melody and rhythm.
1'02"	<i>Shamisen</i> briefly becomes the aural focus.
1'12"	<i>Nokan</i> reappears.
1'20"	Vocalist returns. Note how the <i>shamisen</i> and voice follow the same melodic line.
1'22"	Small gong enters.

Source: "Excerpt from *Dozyozi [Dojoji]*," performed by the Kyoto *Kabuki* Orchestra and recorded by Jacob Feuerring; from the recording titled *Japanese Kabuki Nagauta Music*, Lyricord L1ST 7134, n.d. Used by permission, Lyricord Discs Inc.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.4):** With theatrical performances such as this, it is important to see the on stage activity. Locate and watch a video recording of a *Kabuki* performance in its entirety (*Dozyozi*, if possible).



Cultural Considerations. Kabuki theater, like Japan's other "classic" arts, is preserved in a living, but museum-like setting. In the heart of Tokyo's fashionable shopping district, the Ginza, sits a major theater, the Kabuki-za, which is dedicated entirely to twice-daily performances of *kabuki*. Inside this otherwise modern building is a wide proscenium stage. Two aspects are exceptional, however. First, there is a long walkway leading through the audience to the front of the stage area over which actors enter and exit when required. Second, most of the musicians are plainly visible on stage (positioned at stage left). Most of the singing and all of the narration are performed by a single vocalist accompanied by a *shamisen* player; this pair is known as *chobo*. Unlike the *noh* stage, which has no props and only a painted pine tree as a backdrop, the *kabuki* stage has realistic scenery and props, including building facades.

Performances begin in the morning and continue in the afternoon following a lunch break, which may be taken within the theater itself (patrons may bring box lunches and eat them in their seats). Because of this schedule, there tend to be more women, some drawn to their favorite actors, than men in attendance, because most men work during the day. Women actresses have been banned from public *kabuki* performance for centuries, and some of *kabuki*'s most famous actors actually specialize in women's roles: in private contexts, *geisha* (female traditional artists) will sometimes perform *kabuki* for their exclusive patrons. The stories depict the lives of imaginary people from Japan's feudal age, the age of the *samurai* warrior. The example here is taken from a play titled *Dozyozi* or *Dojoji*, about a Buddhist monk who refuses the advances of a beautiful woman who later turns herself into a monster. As with virtually all Asian theater traditions, the goal is not realism but a highly stylized depiction of archetypical human scenarios, behaviors, characters, and emotions.

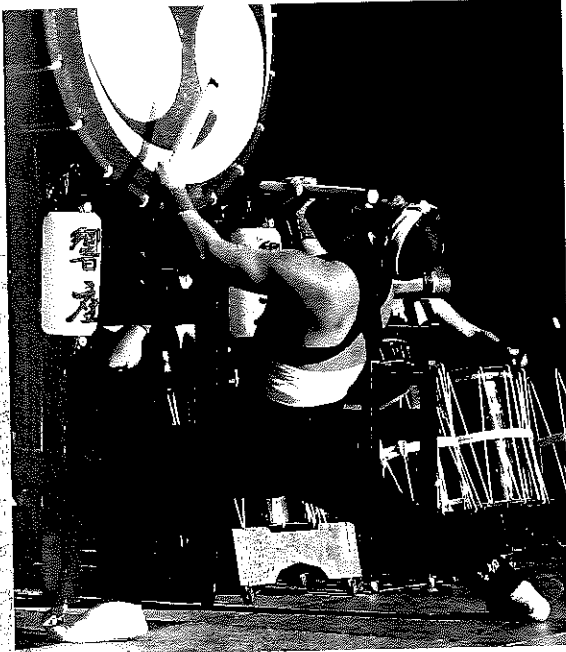
## Explore More

### Taiko

*Taiko* (meaning "big drum" in Japanese) references one of the most popular world music genres to draw international audiences in the past several decades. More correctly referred to as *kumi-daiko*, the first taiko drum ensemble was created in 1951 by Daihachi Oguchi (1924–2008), a Japanese musician with a love for American jazz. He gathered a variety of taiko drums associated individually with other traditions and combined them into a single ensemble. His early compositions were rooted in the drumming patterns of *Shinto* ritual music, but the organization was inspired by the structure of a jazz drum kit. Large, low-pitched taiko (e.g., *odaiko*) emulated the kick drum, while high-pitched taiko (e.g., *shime-daiko*) played more complex rhythms as would a snare drum.

Other taiko (e.g., *nagado-daiko*) along with cymbals and other percussion paralleled the remainder of the kit. The result was an ensemble with a strongly traditional sound but a distinctly modern style.

Oguchi's idea was quickly appealing, and soon other *kumi-daiko* troupes formed. New compositions and performance techniques were incorporated, inspired by Japanese traditional arts. Choreography, drawn from martial arts movements, became an essential feature of performance. By 1964, this new style of taiko performance was popular enough to be featured in the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. By the end of the decade, *taiko* troupes were traveling and performing for audiences throughout Europe and the United States. The San Francisco



Japanese taiko drummer (Shutterstock)

Taiko Dojo (est. 1968) helped spawn amateur and professional ensembles throughout the United States, which have flourished since the 1980s. *Kumi-daiko* ensembles are now a fixture of many music education programs in Japan and are commonly found throughout the world in association with Cherry Blossom Festivals, an annual Japanese celebration of flowers and the coming of Spring. Professional troupes, such as Kodo, are heralded by international audiences and have performed at many prestigious venues, such as Carnegie Hall (New York City, USA) and the Greek Acropolis. Taiko music is also often featured in Hollywood films and television commercials, as the style continues to thrive as part of a growing public interest in world music traditions.

## Arrival: Tibet

Tibet is often referred to as "The Rooftop of the World" because it has the highest elevation of any inhabited region on the planet. The southern border of Tibet is formed by the Himalayas, which includes Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world at over 29,000 feet (8,800 meters). The northern and western borders are also surrounded by mountains, making the Tibetan plateau one of the world's most isolated areas.

Most Tibetans live between 4,000 and 17,000 feet (1,200 and 5,100 meters) above sea level. Generally, they live in rural areas practicing subsistence farming or raising small herds of Tibetan yaks, which provide milk and meat for nourishment as well as fur and leather for clothing and shelter. While nights in Tibet are typically bitter cold, daily temperatures vary widely. Early morning hours are often below freezing, while by midday the temperature can rise to more than 80 degrees Fahrenheit (26.6 Celsius).

Sudden storms are common, and travelers must always be prepared to find shelter should a sudden dust or snow storm occur. The high elevation and lack of vegetation result in low oxygen levels. While outsiders visiting Tibet may find it difficult to breathe, centuries of living in the region have enabled Tibetans to develop increased lung capacity. Still, Tibetans are cautious not to sleep at high elevations while traveling for fear of death from lack of oxygen. Tibetans cope with such survival difficulties through a strong spiritual life.

TIBET

Tibetan Buddhism is practiced by the majority of the population, despite the region being considered a part of the People's Republic of China. While Tibet's relationship with China has ebbed and flowed for many centuries, Tibetans lived with relative autonomy under a theocratic government until 1959, when the communist Chinese government asserted its authority over the region and invaded. The Chinese placed severe restrictions on religious practice and in general attempted to Sinicize the region. The Dalai Lama, considered by most Tibetans to be a "living Buddha" as well as their secular and spiritual leader, fled to India to escape capture. Many monasteries were pillaged and numerous monks and other Tibetans were killed defending sacred sites and the Tibetan way of life.

Relations remain strained between Tibetans and the Chinese authorities. The Dalai Lama remains in exile but has helped to establish many Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and even in the United States. While restrictions against religious practices in Tibet have eased, many of the monasteries are today considered museums and are more frequented by visiting tourists than occupied by monks. Tibetan secular culture continues to survive, but the centuries-old spiritual practices of the Tibetans are best examined in monasteries and Tibetan communities outside of the region.

### Site 9: Tibetan Buddhist Ritual

**First Impressions.** For most outsiders, Tibetan ritual music has a mysterious and eerie sound. Alternately blaring and foghorn-like sounds produced by trumpets come in slow waves, supported by the rumble of drums and punctuated by the sound of a single cymbal. The guttural chants of Buddhist monks seem to summon centuries of sacred spirits, pressing listeners in the modern era to expand our definitions of music.

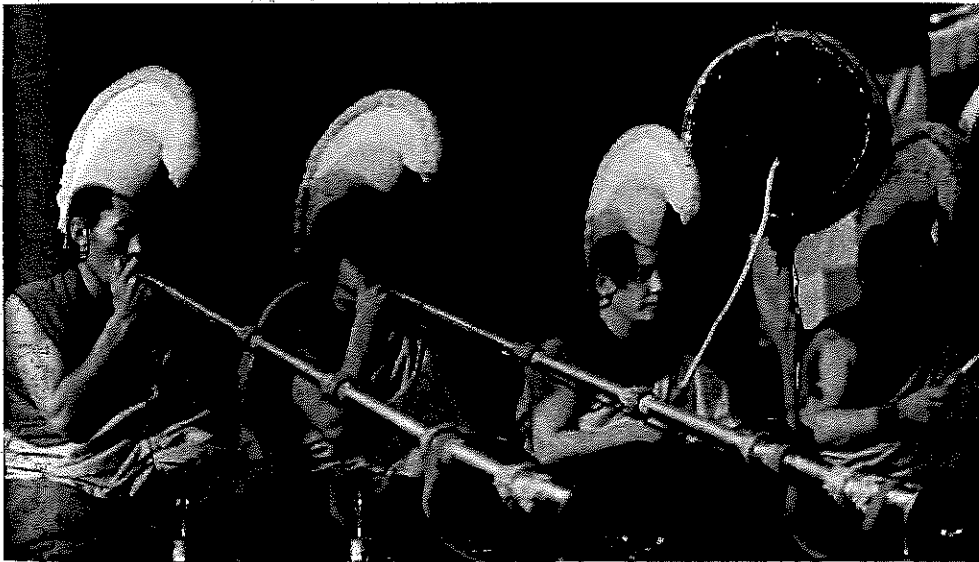
**Aural Analysis.** The music of Tibetan Buddhist ritual involves a limited number of instruments. The *kang dung* trumpet, traditionally made from a human thighbone but today made of metal, is most prominent with its widely wavering blare. *Dung kar* conch shell trumpets are played with a similar technique and are difficult to distinguish from the *kang dung* based on timbre alone. The *kang dung* and *dung kar* are played in pairs, with one performer overlapping his sound with the other so that a continuous sound is produced. In our example the *kang dung* sounds first with a slightly brighter timbre and a higher pitch, while the *dung kar* echoes at almost a semitone lower. The other distinctive instrument is the *dung chen*, a metal trumpet that is usually between 5 and 12 feet (1.5 and 3.5 meters) long; the longer of these are usually played outdoors. *Dung chen* produce very low pitches and are also frequently played in pairs.

The percussion instruments found in Tibetan Buddhist rituals usually include drums and cymbals. The most common drums, *nga bom*, are double-faced frame membranophones that hang vertically in a stand and are struck by a hook-shaped stick. They have a deep timbre and are struck with slow, solitary pulses that usually correspond to either the trumpets or chanting. Large cymbals, called *rom*, are common as well and are most often played to accompany chant. While our example includes only one cymbal, which is struck lightly with a wooden stick, the *rom* are usually quite loud and are used to punctuate the ends of chanted phrases.

Throughout our example, the upper trumpets waver on their respective pitches a mere semitone apart, creating a very dissonant, unsettling sound. The *dung chen* begins with a

**DUNG CHEN**  
A long metal trumpet with low tones blown during Tibetan ritual.

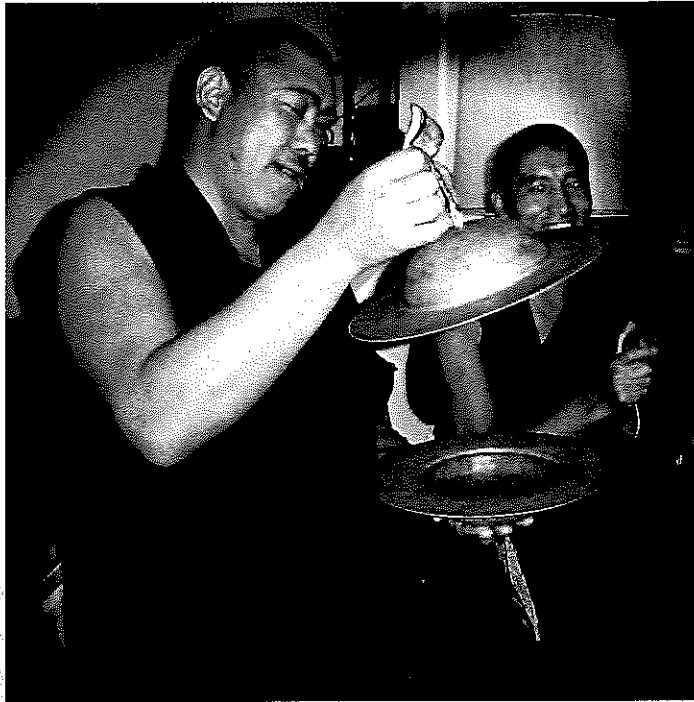
low straight tone before rising to the pitch produced by the *kang dung*, which is the interval of a tritone (flatted fifth) above—an interval that Western theorists historically considered “uncomfortable.” The percussion instruments are heard as well, seemingly in free rhythm, but actually following a long metric cycle articulated primarily by the drum. After the opening instrumental section, the drum provides a steady pulsation that accompanies the chanting monks, who dwell on a single low pitch. The instruments then interrupt before the *dung chen* sounds with percussion accompaniment.



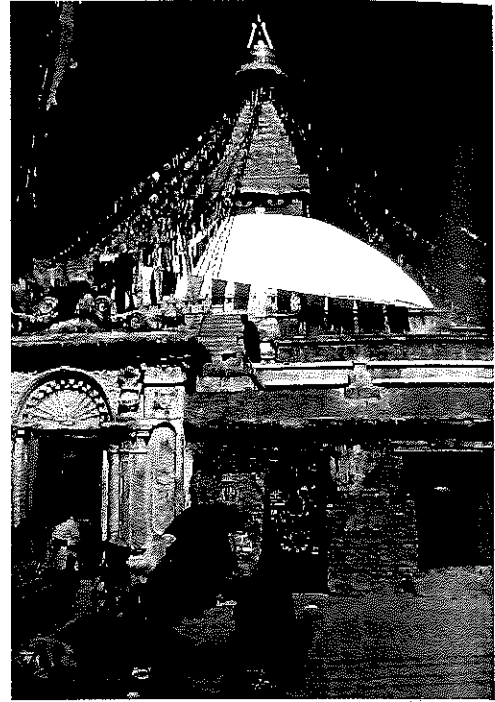
Tibetan Buddhist monks of the Gyuto sect performing the *dung-chen* (long trumpets) (Jack Vartogian/ FrontRowPhotos)



Tibetan Buddhist monk plays the *gyaling* (double reed aerophone)



Tibetan Buddhist monks play a *rom* (pair of large cymbals)



Bodhnath Stupa, a temple frequented by Tibetans living in exile near Kathmandu, Nepal. A man chants on the left while another turns a prayer wheel on the right

## LISTENING GUIDE



CD 2.5 (2'03")

### Chapter 7: Site 9

### Tibet: Buddhist Ritual

Vocals: Male vocal ensemble

Instruments: *Dribu* (bell), *dung chen* (low-range trumpets), *kang dung* (mid-range trumpets), *nga bam* (drum), *rom* (cymbals) and woodblock

TIME	LISTENING FOCUS
0'00"	<i>Dribu</i> (bell) sounds at start of example, followed by a <i>kang dung</i> (trumpet) and then a second <i>kang dung</i> . Listen for the "wavering" timbre and overlapping technique of the two trumpets.
0'02"	<i>Rom</i> (cymbals), which play throughout the performance, enter.
0'04"	<i>Dung chen</i> (long trumpets) enter.



- 007" *Nga bom* (drum) enters.
- 010" The *dung chen* sounds a higher pitch.
- 011" Brief pause in the trumpet performance.
- 018" *Kang dung* stop.
- 050" Congregation of male vocalists chants along with more active performance on the *nga bom* and a woodblock.
- 055" *Dung chen* stop.
- 067" *Dribu* sounds again, followed by the *kang dung*, *rom*, and *dung chen*.
- 095" The *kang dung* stop and the *dung chen* play a series of low bursts along with the *rom* and *nga bom*.
- 098" Congregation of vocalists returns, accompanied by the *nga bom* and woodblock as the example fades.

Source: "Genyen gi toba ('In praise of Ge-nyen')," performed by the monks of Thimphu and nuns of Punakha and recorded by John Levy; from the recording titled *Tibetan Buddhist Rites from the Monasteries of Bhutan, Volume 1: Rituals of the Bonpo Order*, Lyricord LYRCD 7255, n.d. Used by permission, Lyricord Discs Inc.

**ETHNO-CHALLENGE (CD 2.5):** Make a necklace of prayer beads—that is, a rosary (known as *māla*) of 108 beads. Chant the sacred mantra, "*Om Mani Peme Hung*" (Om, Jewel of the Lotus) 108 times or, for a real challenge, one million times, as many Tibetans do for purification and to acquire spiritual merit.

**Cultural Considerations.** In Tibet, the chants and instrumental performances that appear in Buddhist ritual are regarded more as spiritual sounds than as music. The primary intended audience for such performances is the various deities and spirits associated with Tibetan Buddhism.

Buddhism is thought to have come to Tibet during the mid-eighth century with the arrival of Padmasambhava (717–762 C.E.), a legendary monk who was believed to have great magical powers that could drive away demons. Padmasambhava practiced a unique form of Buddhism known as Tantrism, which emphasized the use of symbols, ritual objects, and yoga practices in the quest for enlightenment. A primary goal of Tantric Buddhism, as Tibetan Buddhism is often called, is to overcome the fear of death and thus make death powerless to prevent a person from attaining enlightenment.

Tibetans have long been preoccupied with death. The fragility of life in the harsh environment of the Tibetan plateau led, before the arrival of Buddhism, to the development of a spiritual belief system known as *Bonism*, which was centered on a group of dangerous and fearful demons. Because these demons could control the elements and take life unexpectedly, Bonist priests performed rituals and gave offerings in order to appease them. Many of these priests were feared, as human sacrifices were among the methods used to win the demons' favor. When Padmasambhava arrived with the assurance that Buddhism could

overcome death and drive away such demons, most Tibetans embraced the new religion and its non-sacrificial rites.

One of the more interesting customs found in Tibetan Buddhism is the use of prayer wheels. While the ultimate goal of all Buddhists is to attain enlightenment, most accept that attaining a higher rebirth in the next life is a more practical spiritual goal. Chanting prayers is considered a way to earn spiritual merit, which in turn helps boost one's chances of a higher rebirth. Prayer wheels can help with this accumulation of merit. Each wheel has a prayer written on the outside, as well as a prayer written on parchment inside. Tibetan Buddhists believe that each time the wheel is spun, the words are "written on the wind."

Musical performances are most important to rituals involving groups rather than individuals. The blaring sounds of the trumpets are meant either to drive away evil deities or to call benevolent ones. The deep sound of the *dung chen* is said to imitate the trumpeting of the elephant, which is considered a powerful animal. The *dung kar*, which are highly valued instruments because conch shells are rarely found so far from the sea, can call spirits as well but are also frequently used to make announcements or to sound warnings. The *kang dung* is ideally made from a human thighbone, to remind believers that physical life is impermanent. These trumpets often play a prominent role in calling the faithful, be they living or ancestral spirits. The percussion instruments function primarily to emphasize structural points, by marking the ends of both instrumental and chanted phrases.

Chanting the *sutras*, or Buddhist prayers, is a primary activity among Tibetan Buddhist monks. The deep guttural utterances are said to represent the fundamental sound of the human body when all else is in complete silence. Complete awareness of one's physical self is an important aspect of preparing for the body's eventual demise. The body is, however, merely the cup that holds the spiritual nectar. When the body dies, the spirit is released and is housed in a new form. This consciousness of the impermanence of all things is fundamental to Tibetan theology.

Certain Tibetan Buddhist sects practice a unique form of chant in which they sound two tones at once, a low fundamental tone and a high frequency overtone. This technique is believed to enable a monk's spirit to travel to the spiritual plane. By visiting the spiritual plane, the monk is able to achieve "death without dying," and he thereby gains knowledge of the afterlife, thus robbing death of some of its fearful sting. During this chanting, a monk's heartbeat can slow dramatically and his breathing may become almost imperceptible. While only Tibetan monks perform these spiritual practices, the spiritual life of all Tibetan Buddhists is focused on overcoming death.

## Questions to Consider

1. How do attitudes toward traditionality and modernization affect music differently in China than they do in Japan and South Korea?
2. In China, how did the Cultural Revolution affect the development of music and theater?
3. How are the aesthetics of music in Japan shaped by both Confucianism and Buddhism?



4. How are the types of East Asian theater different from theater and opera in the West?
5. What spiritual role does music play in Tibetan Buddhist ritual?
6. Discuss East Asian attitudes toward professional musicians and actors and explain why amateur music-making was held in such high esteem.

## On Your Own Time

Visit the textbook website to find these resources for further exploration on your own.

### China

**Book:** Yung, Bell. *The Last of China's Literati: The Music, Poetry and Life of Tsar Teh-yun*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008.

<http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/YUNBEL.html>

**Website:** North American Guqin Association  
<http://www.guqin.org/>

**Website:** Chinese Guqin Playing and Notation  
<http://www.peiyuqin.com/>

**Website:** Instruments of Sizhu Music  
<http://www.cfmw.com.tw/eng/instruments.html>

**Book:** Thrasher, Alan. *Chinese Musical Instruments*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.  
<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/Music/WorldMusicEthnomusicology/?view=usa&ci=9780195907773>

**Book:** Joshua Goldstein. *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870-1937*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.  
<http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520247529>

**DVD:** *Farewell My Concubine*. Dir. Kaige, Chen. Miramax, 1993.  
[http://www.illuminatedlantern.com/cinema/review/archives/farewell\\_my\\_concubine.php](http://www.illuminatedlantern.com/cinema/review/archives/farewell_my_concubine.php)

**Book:** Lu, Xing. *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication*. Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2004.  
<http://www.sc.edu/uscpres/books/2004/3543.html>

**Internet:** Popular Artists from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

Jackie Chan  
Teresa Teng  
Faye Wong  
Anita Mui  
Cui Jian

### Mongolia (and Tuva)

**Book:** Pegg, Carole. *Mongolian Music, Dance and Oral Narrative: Performing Diverse Identities*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001.

<http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/PEGMOC.html>