



(LAS 7182)

## CHINESE CLASSICAL MASTERPIECES for the Pipa and Chin, performed by Lui Tsun-Yuen

### THE SONGS:

**SNOW IN SUNNY SPRING.** Anonymous. A spirited number demanding great virtuosity, its theme is based on the popular folk tune Liu Pan. Dissonant intervals, parallel octaves, fifths, and fourths are commonly employed in this work whose form closely resembles the rondo form of western music.

**MOONLIGHT OVER THE SPRING RIVER** by Yu Shi-Nan, Tang Dynasty (17th Century A.D.). A descriptive piece divided into short sections in which the haunting melodic subject receives varied treatment. The recurrence of the theme is preceded by a deliberate roll produced by stroking the strings in rapid sequence. In the slow passage, the notes are sustained by a combination of vibrato and sideward movement of the string, a characteristic Pipa technique to create a fine legato.

**CHINESE SOLDIERS' MARCH** by Lui Tsun-Yuen. Two Chinese marching songs are incorporated in this descriptive scene in which troop formations are depicted in ceremonial parade.

**A BUDDHIST CHANT.** Anonymous. A colorful composition for Chin in which the music imitates the monotonous chanting of the monks accompanied by bells and woodblocks. Echo effects are achieved by sounding additional notes on a previously stopped string.

PLUM BLOSSOMS. Traditional. Arranged by Hsia Pao-Shen, a contemporary authority on Chinese instrumental music, the work consists of several short sections woven into a single gossamer strand, ending abruptly in a short Coda, *piu mosso*.

THE LAMENT OF EMPRESS CHEN. Anonymous. Having met with the Emperor's displeasure, the Empress Chen was banished to live alone in the Chang Meng Palace. She was returned to the Emperor's grace after he had heard this touching lament written on her behalf by Sze-ma Shinn-ju.

THE RUNNING BROOK by Lui Tsun-Yuen. A series of inventions, based on a central musical idea, this composition utilizes the entire gamut of Pipa techniques to depict the gurgling brook, spinning mill, and splashing water.

SONG OF THE FRONTIER Attributed to Wang Chiang, Han Dynasty (1st Century B.C.). Wang Chiang, the legendary heroine, was one of the ladies of the royal court of Han dispatched by the Emperor to marry a Mongolian prince. Bound for the frontier, and in the face of an unknown fate, she brought along a Pipa to relieve the gloom of her long journey. She was said to have composed a suite of music expressing her innermost feelings, from which this piece was taken. The highly modal quality of the music and its very monotony serve to convey her deeply lonesome feeling.

THE HERO'S DEFEAT attributed to Wang Wei, Tang Dynasty (8th Century A.D.). A dramatic portrayal of the epic battle between the kingdoms of Han and Chu, this work is characteristic of the military school of Pipa music, as contrasted to the gentler civil school. The work's dominant motif depicts the hero, Hsiang Yu, and is subjected to intense rhythmic treatment. Sounds of a cavalry charge, hand-to-hand fighting, and rebellious cries around the hero's camp are heard. The music subsides into a lament sung by the hero as he is forced to abandon his favorite courtesan. Finally, the Chu army is routed, and the tragedy ends with the suicide of the hero.

## THE INSTRUMENTS

PIPA is a Chinese musical instrument whose history dates back to 500 A.D. The instrument probably has its origin in Central Asia and was first introduced to China by way of Turkistan in the Six Dynasties. The Pipa quickly became the favorite instrument of the royal courts and its use had been closely associated with song and dance, especially in what was then known as "Yen Yueh" - entertainment music. The Pipa has four strings strung over frets made of ivory and bamboo. The pear-shape shell is made of teak wood and the sounding board of Wutung wood. It has a range of four and a half octaves with chromatic and quarter tone intervals. The standard tuning is in fourths and seconds but the system of tuning changes with the type of music played. The player uses no plectrum but plays with his fingernails.

The Pipa has a rich and varied tonal palette. In the hands of a fine player, it is capable of producing an infinite variety of effects ranging from rousing bravura to the softest whisper. Basically a solo chamber instrument, its tone is intimate but can rise to great magnitude and power when called for.

The Pipa has been associated with entertainment and, frequently in the hands of the professional player, has led to a highly developed playing technique and a rich repertoire of original and interesting compositions. The versatility of this unique instrument has inspired composers to write much descriptive music depicting great battle scenes, the phenomena of nature and lyrical pieces of great loveliness. Pipa pieces were written in fingered notations and a great number exists in private collections accessible only to the small circle of professional players. [This has changed since this was written in 1965] Wang Chiang, Yu Shi-Nan, Pei Shen-Fu and the poet Wang Wei in the past and the contemporary Chinese composer Liu Tien-Hua all contributed substantially to its repertoire.

CHIN is a classical instrument whose history is as old as that of China. Historical chronicles allude to the use of the Chin by Confucius and various romantic stories have become associated with this ancient instrument. Unlike the Pipa, the Chin was the instrument of the philosophers and the scholars. Without the flair and the virtuosity of the Pipa, the Chin is fragile and delicate in tone and is especially adept in evoking a mood and in the playing of lyrical music.

The Chin has seven strings strung over a slab of Wutung wood. The tuning is pentatonic. The player uses the fingers of both hands to stop and pluck the strings producing a range of tonal effects. Much original and arranged music has been written for the Chin.

#### THE ARTIST

LUI TSUN-YUEN was born of a musical family in Soochow, China. At the age of ten, he took up the study of the Pipa and the Chin with the foremost masters in China and was coached by such musical scholars as Wang Yu-Ting and Hsia Pao-Shen. Equipped with a prodigious technique, Lui is a sensitive musician who is completely dedicated to his instruments. The only accomplished player in the Western countries, Lui is regarded at home, despite his youth, as one of the few great exponents of these classical instruments. Lui is also a composer and has written original compositions for the Pipa.

Lui has played in Hong Kong both in recitals and in radio broadcasts. In Brazil, he was presented on T.V. by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. He also participated in the 1958 Sao Paulo Music Festival in a recital of Chinese classical music. Lui's performance was recorded by the B.B.C. for its permanent record collections.

[N.B. These are the original liner notes from 1965.]

## The Tracks

- 1) CHINESE CLASSICAL MASTERPIECES (3:38)  
for the Pipa and Chin performed by Lui Tsun-Yuen
- 2) SNOW IN SUNNY SPRING. Anonymous (10:20)
- 3) MOONLIGHT OVER THE SPRING RIVER by Yu Shi-Nan, Tang Dynasty (17th Century A.D.). (3:53)
- 4) CHINESE SOLDIERS' MARCH by Lui Tsun-Yuen (7:53)
- 5) PLUM BLOSSOMS. Traditional (3:20)
- 6) THE LAMENT OF EMPRESS CHEN. Anonymous (4:38)
- 7) THE RUNNING BROOK by Lui Tsun-Yuen. (4:21)
- 8) SONG OF THE FRONTIER Attributed to Wang Chiang, Han Dynasty (1st Century B.C.). (4:01)
- 9) THE HERO'S DEFEAT attributed to Wang Wei, Tang Dynasty (8th Century A.D.). (9:51)

Originally released on Lyrichord Discs in 1965 – and now part of the Lyrichord Archive Series.



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