

The Chinese Cheng

古箏新曲集

Ancient and Modern



(LYRCD 7302)

THE CHINESE CHENG ANCIENT AND MODERN

Professor Liang Tsai-Ping, master of the 16-string zither

TRACKS:

1. Inlaid Zither - 7:20
2. Floating Lotus - 4:35
3. Poem of Ping's Garden - 5:31
4. Renaissance - 4:49
5. A Romantic Dream - 3:45
6. Lover's Reiteration - 3:45
7. Lyric of Ping's Garden - 6:16
8. High Mountain and Flowing Stream (Kao Shan) - 7:53

THE CHENG

The Cheng is a 16-stringed zither, originated in the Ch'in Dynasty (221-206 B.C.). Versions of the instrument are found in Japan (koto), Korea (kayageum), Vietnam (dan tranh), and Mongolia (yatag), among others. Koto and kayageum use silk strings, the dan tranh uses metal ones. In China silk strings were originally used, but brass has also been used since the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644A.D.). Each string has an individual movable bridge which can be adjusted to change the length of the string and hence its pitch. There are also individual tuning pegs to set the proper tension. In basic cheng technique the thumb, index, and middle fingers of the right hand pluck the strings while the left hand presses beyond the bridge to provide ornaments, slides, and vibrato.

THE MUSICIAN: LIANG TSAI-PING AND THE REBIRTH OF THE CHENG

The Cheng, in spite of the glorious mission it fulfilled in the history of Chinese music, somehow did not sustain its popularity in its native land in the past five hundred years. During the Tang and Sung Dynasties (618-1297 A.D.) the instrument was introduced into Korea and Japan, and has flourished there ever since. In China, however, it had become archaic by the beginning of the Republic of China (1912). Because of Professor Tsai-ping Liang's personal interest and zeal the instrument has been revived.

Professor Liang is president of the Chinese Classical Music Association, so religiously devoted to the Cheng that he not only studies and improves it but also collects ancient works and creates new ones. He pays homage to many surviving masters of the instrument all over China, trying their different styles, recording their performances, and comparing artistic and technical notes with them. Since the organization of the Chinese Classical Music Association in Taipei in 1951, the Cheng has become one of the important instruments for solo performance, as well as a component in the Chinese classical orchestra.

Professor Liang was a student in Peking, studying with Professors Ying-mei Shih and Tze-you Wei. After printing his first work Ni Cheng Pu in 1938, he brought his instruments and conferred with several masters and companies. He had his first performance in India when he was on his way to the United States. While at Yale University, 1945-1946, he introduced a performance on the "China Program" with the American writer Emily Hahn, on Dumont Television. A colorful sound film called "Melody of Ancient China" was produced for him by the Harmon Foundation in 1946. Under the sponsorship of Pearl Buck, Professor Liang gave solo performances in major American cities. He moved to Taiwan in 1949; following the release of his first composition, "Longing for an Old Friend" in 1951, he composed more than 40 songs for the Cheng.

His book, Music of the Cheng, is published in its sixth edition.

Professor Liang received a warm welcome from the Japanese national Koto artist Miyagi Michio when he traveled to Japan in 1952. He introduced the Cheng at the First Southeast Asia Music Conference in Manila in 1955. He performed in 10 countries in Europe in 1958, participated in the International Music Symposium in Manila, and served as the Chief Delegate of the Republic of China in April 1966. Under the sponsorship of the Honolulu Academy of Art, he performed and lectured on seven American campuses in May 1967.

Professor Liang's music was warmly received in Seoul, Korea, under the auspices of Sarabul Art College and the National Classical Music Institute of Korea. For the Asia Society in New York, he directed the Shantung Music Ensemble in 50 recitals in the United States in spring 1972. Invited by the Overseas Chinese Teachers Federation, Professor Liang performed at Singapore and in four cities of Malaysia, Bangkok, and Hong Kong in 1973.

Invited by the Performing Arts Programs, Asia Society, Professor Liang made a successful three-month recital (including Carnegie Hall) and lecture tour to Japan, Canada, and United States of America in the spring of 1974. After his numerous trips abroad Professor Liang concluded that classical music plays an important role in promoting understanding among nations.



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