



(LYRCD 792)

## **CHINA'S INSTRUMENTAL HERITAGE**

### **Performed by Professor Liang Tsai-Ping and his Group**

#### **TRACKS**

1. Wild Geese Alighting on the Sandy Shore  
performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Wong Chen-Hwa - 3:23
2. Old Monk Sweeping the Buddhist Temple  
performed by Liang Ming-Yueh - 1:59
3. Ascending to the Top of a Tower performed by Liang Min-Shih - 2:26
4. The Hundred Birds Courting the Phoenix  
performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Lin Pei - 2:17
5. The Farewell performed by Liang Ming-Yueh - 2:51
6. Freedom March performed by Liang MIn-Shih - 4:36
7. Flowers on Brocade performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Wong Chen-Hwa - 2:24
8. Remembering an Old Friend performed by Liang Tsai-Ping - 2:26
9. Relieving My Heart performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Liang Min-Shih - 3:03
10. Winter Ravens Sporting over the Water  
performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Wong Chen-Hwa - 2:55
11. The Spring River in the Flowery Moonlight  
performed by Liang Tsai-Ping / Liang Ming-Yueh / Wong Chen-Hwa - 11:25

#### **THE INSTRUMENTS**

The *Cheng*, of the silk group, is similar to a zither. It has sixteen strings stretched over sixteen frets on an oblong wooden sound box. It is said to have originated in the Ch'in Dynasty (221 – 206 B.C.), and therefore it is sometimes called the ch'in cheng. Apparently the earliest form of the instrument, in the Ch'in and Han Dynasties, had twelve strings. Later, the thirteenth to sixteen strings were added. The strings were originally silk, but brass ones have also been used since the late Ming and early Ch'ing dynasties (about 1650). The cheng was introduced into Japan in its thirteen-stringed and called koto. The Korean and Vietnamese also imported the cheng from China. Professor Liang Tsai-Ping, who was born in Kaoyang, Hopei, in 1911, has vigorously revived the instrument and a promising period for the instrument is beginning.

The *Hsiao*, the vertical flute, of the bamboo group, is a bamboo pipe, originally dark or light brown in color, about 22 inches long. It has five holes along the upper side and one along the under side.

The *Sheng*, of the gourd group, could be called a “mouth pipe-organ.” It is distinguished among Chinese instruments by its unique harmonic feature. Along the brim of its gourd base or body there are irregular vertical bamboo pipes. It is played by sucking in the breath at the mouth of each pipe, which leads out of the base or body, very much like the spout of a teapot. The Northern type of Sheng has seventeen pipes and the Southern thirteen. The pipes all have reeds.

The *Hsun* (sometimes, *Hsuin*), of the clay group, is an ocarina, one of the most ancient instruments in China. It is made of baked clay and ornamented with designs of dragons, clouds, etc. It has six holes, one at the apex to blow through, three in front, and two in back. When it is played, it is held firmly in both hands.

The *Nan-Hu*, the Southern fiddle or violin, of the silk group, is a very popular instrument in China today. Introduced into China proper from neighboring Mongolia, probably in the Yuan dynasty (1280-1368), it has a hollow cylindrical body, one end of which is covered with snakeskin while the other is kept open. The body is attached to a long arm over which two strings are stretched. The bow is moved between the strings.

## THE MUSIC

1. P'ing sha lo yen, "Wild Geese Alighting on the Sandy Shore," (3:23) is a North China folk song of the 17th century. The instruments are the cheng accompanied by the *Hsiao*, played by Professor Liang T'sai-Ping and Wong Chen-Hwa. Originally, the song was for the cheng or ch'in, by an unknown musician. There are many instrumental versions; the cheng version considerably differs from the others. The beginning is played with a special method of fingering for the left hand ("tracing without steps," *yu hen wu chi*), which suggests wild geese alighting on a sandy shore. Another interpretation is that it tells the tragic story of a pair of wild geese: one of them is shot down on the sandy shore, the spouse at her own risk comes to join her partner, and they become eternal lovers.

2. Lao sen saqo tien, "Old Monk Sweeping in the Buddhist Temple," (1:59) is a North China (*shantung*) folk song of the 14th century. The *sheng* is played by Liang Ming-Yueh. The song is about an old Buddhist monk cleaning the courtyard of his temple with a broom. Step by step and stroke by stroke, the rhythm accompanies his sweeping.

3. Teng lou, "Ascending to the Top of a Tower," (2:26) is a North China (*Hopei*) folk song of the 18th century. The cheng is played by Liang Min-Shih (Miriam Liang). It sets to music a famous prose poem by Wang Ts'an (177-217), Teeng-lou Fu ("Ascending to the top of a tower"). The theme is:

"To exhaust the sight over a thousand miles, why not up to another floor of the tower?"

4. Pai niao chao feng, "Hundred Birds Courting the Phoenix," (2:17) is a North China (*Honan*) folk song of the 17th century, originally music for an imperial banquet. The cheng solo is accompanied by nan-hu, the performers are Professor Liang and Lin Pei.

The Chinese folk believe that the phoenix is the queen of birds. Here her majesty is holding court before an audience of her subjects. In Imperial times (before 1912), it was played by the orchestra at court banquets.

5. Yang-Kuan san tieh, "The Farewell," (2:51) is a North China (Shensi) folk song of the 8th century. The *hsun* solo is played by Liang Ming-Yueh. It is a musical setting of the famous ch'i-chueh (28-word or character) poem by Wang Wei (699-759) called Yang-kuan san tieh or Wei-ch'eng ch'u (Three

repetitions at Yangkuan” or “The Song of Wei-ch’eng”):

“(Here in) Wei-ch’eng/the morning rain  
wets down the light dust  
and  
turns afresh the green, green, willows in the inn.  
Bottoms up, once again, please.  
Westward beyond Yang-kuan  
there will be  
no more  
old friends.”

Yang-kuan was the west gate of the great T’ag Empire. The composer of the music is unknown; originally, it was for the cheng. Among the many instrumental versions, the shsun one is perhaps the most colorful and thrilling.

6. Tsu-yu hsing, “Freedom March,” (4:36) was composed by Liang Tsai-Ping in 1952. Miriam Liang is again the cheng soloist. It is a lyrical march with the main spirit being one of encouragement. In the development, there are sentimental moods and feelings of sadness, but it ends triumphantly.

7. Chin shang hua, “Flowers on Brocade,” (2:24) is a North China (Hopei) folk song of the 16th century. The cheng solo is accompanied by Hsiao, the performers are Professor Liang and Wong Chen-Hwa. The lyricism is dazzlingly brilliant here. It is as beautiful as flowers in blossom time steadily mounting on magnificent brocade. The (3:23) work was used in Professor Liang’s documentary film, “Melody of Ancient China.”

8. I ku-jen, “Remembering an Old, Old Friend,” (2:26) was composed by Liang Tsai-Ping in 1951. Professor Liang also plays the cheng solo. This was the first creative work of the composer after he arrived on the island of Taiwan from the mainland of China. The song remembers an old friend who has completely lost his freedom; the theme is developed in dialogue form.

9. Shu-hua ch’u, “Relieving My Heart,” (3:03) was also composed by Liang Tsai-Ping in 1951. The cheng solo is accompanied by the sheng, the performers are Professor Liang and Miriam Liang. There are four sections in the work: a singer’s echo, variations in the towering mood, everlasting feelings, and relieving my heart.

10. Han ya his sui, “Winter Ravens Sporting Over the Water,” (2:55) is a North China (Shendi) folk song of the 10th century. The cheng solo is played by Professor Liang and the Hsiao by Wong Chen-Hwa. This is perhaps one of the oldest cheng works surviving from the Five Dynasties (906-960): In a winter morning, a lone raven helplessly hovers over the water. At last, another raven comes to join her mate. Thus, they begin to sing joyfully, and finally disappear together beyond the horizon.

11. Ch’un Chiang Hua Yueh Yeh, (11:25) “The Spring River in the Flowery Moonlight,” is a North China (Shen-si) folk song of the 7th century, arranged by Liang Tsai-ping. The four instruments – cheng, sheng, Hsiao, and nan-hu are played by Professor Liang, Liang Ming-Yueh, Wong Chen-Hwa, and Lin Pei. This is a great work in the history of Chinese music. It originated in a short, modest, lyrical form during the Six Dynasties (220-588), and was expanded into a monumental work in the T’ang Dynasty (618-906). Originally it was a pipa (lute) composition, named “Moonlight over Hsunyang.” It sings about a home-bound boat drifting along the spring river under the flowering moonlight. Professor Liang’s arrangement makes use of a special fingering method.

## CREDITS

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