INTRODUCTION

Today's China is the product of more than four thousand years of interaction with many other civilizations around the globe, receiving contributions from these civilizations and in turn
enriching them. The population of the People's Republic of China (PRC), established in 1949, is now close to a billion and a quarter people and includes some fifty-six officially recognized ethnic groups, known as "nationalities" (minzu). Among these, the Han nationality is the largest and is, in fact, the world's largest ethnic group; it comprises more than 93 percent of the country's population. Other major nationalities include the Zhuang, Mongolian, Manchu, Tibetan, and a large group of nationalities who are followers of Islam: the Hui, Uyghur, Kazak, Tartar, Kirgiz, Tajik, and Uzbek, to name a few. Among the Muslim groups the Hui and Uyghur are the largest. The ancestors of the Hui were Arabian, Persian, Central Asian, and Mongolian Muslim merchants, militia, and officials, who first settled in northwest China from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries and later spread all over China. The Uyghur (meaning "united" or "allied") are one of the ancient Turkic people, who were originally nomads and around the sixth century settled as farmers in what is today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the PRC, as well as in central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The Uyghur already had high culture and written language in the fifth century. They first practiced Buddhism and served as important transmitters of this religion and concomitant Indie civilization to China prior to the tenth century A.D.; thereafter, however, they were converted to Islam.

![Ensemble of Uyghur musicians performing in a restaurant in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.](image)

Among the fifty-five minority nationalities, only the Hui and Manchu use the Han language (Chinese, or putuaghua, meaning the national tongue, and known in the West as Mandarin). The others speak their own languages: twenty-nine groups use languages in the Sino-Tibetan language family, and they live in central, south, and southwest China; ten groups use languages in the Altaic language family, and they live in northeast and northwest China; in addition, some other groups speak Indo-European languages. Often, the various minority
groups speak each other's languages, as well as the Han language. Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Tartars speak Uyghur, a Turkic language, for instance.

**BEIJING**

Beijing, meaning "capital (jing) in the north (bei)" is a municipality that serves as the capital of the PRC and hence as its administrative, political, and cultural center. However, prior to the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Beijing had served as the capital city for three dynasties: the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368), established by the invading Mongols; the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), established by the Han, who replaced the Mongols; and the Qing dynasty (pronounced "ching"; 1644-1911), established by the invading Manchu, who destroyed the Ming forces. Yet, first-time visitors to Beijing today who expect to see an ancient city may be surprised to find a brash and modern metropolis crisscrossed by many freeways and flyovers and spiked with high-rises. Between the swaths of concrete and glass, however, visitors may still find some old temples, drum and bell towers, and remnants of traditional quadrangle courtyard housing complexes known as *si he yuan* (four buildings surrounding a courtyard) hidden in old alleyways known by the Mongolian term *hutong*. And certainly, modern visitors to Beijing will visit the grandest remnant of all, the imperial palace of the Ming and Qing dynasties known as the Forbidden City, because common people were forbidden to enter it unless summoned by the emperor. The Forbidden City, which occupies more than three square miles and consists of nearly a hundred grand pavilions with yellow tile roofs, is situated at the central axis of old Beijing. For today's modern dwellers of a much expanded Beijing, the Forbidden City is still regarded as the cardinal point for the city.

Just to the north of the city, within a day's trip, visitors can visit the Great Wall (*changcheng*) nearly 3,000 miles long and extending from east to west China. Begun in the Warring States period (435-221 B.C.E.), the Great Wall was completed by the first king of the Qin dynasty (pronounced "chin"), who reigned during 221-209 B.C.E. In the subsequent Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), the Great Wall was extended farther west. Part of the Han dynasty wall still exists in Gansu province in the west. Most of the Great Wall north of Beijing, where most of today's tourists go, was reconstructed in the Ming period.

Despite its long presence as a capital city for various Chinese dynasties, Beijing is a latecomer in Chinese history. Earlier capitals—Chang'an (today's Xi'an, in Shanxi province) and Luoyang (in Henan province) for the Han and Tang dynasties (A.D. 618-905) and Kaifeng (in Henan province) for the northern Song dynasties (A.D. 960-995)—are all situated in north-central China west of Beijing. Prior to the thirteenth century, Beijing was but an insignificant trading center in the north for Mongols, Koreans, and local Chinese people. Its predominance began in the mid-thirteenth century with the formation of Mongol China (Yuan dynasty) under Genghis
Khan (c. 1162-1227) and later his grandson Kublai Khan (1215-1294), who took control of the city in 1264 and established it as his capital. Marco Polo (1254?—1324?), the Venetian who had worked in Beijing under the Mongol government in the Yuan dynasty, reported that the city had many merchants from all over the world. According to him, a thousand merchants daily arrived in Beijing with camel or donkey carts laden with gemstones, spices, and incense. On their return, they carried with them precious cargos of silk, tea, and porcelain. This international commerce made Beijing very wealthy and cosmopolitan.

Beijing's wealth came from the city's position, beginning in the thirteenth century, as the terminus of the Silk Road. The name Silk Road was given to the ancient caravan trade routes by a German geographer in the 1870s. These routes were first developed by an emperor of the Han dynasty to bring China's capital, Chang'an, in the center of the country, into contact with Central Asian kingdoms (many of which were founded by the ancestors of the Uyghur people), and ultimately several great East-West trade routes joined the many Uyghur oasis cities along the northern and southern rims of the Taklamakan Desert, continuing on to the Middle East and ultimately reaching the Mediterranean.

More than just a series of trade routes, the Silk Road was also an ancient superhighway for cultural exchange. Manicheanism (an early form of Christianity originating in present-day Syria) and Buddhism (originating in India) came to China along the Silk Road. Through it, music and musical instruments and dance from India and the Middle East also came to China. For example, the popular plucked string instrument known as the pipa was imported to Tang China from Kucha in today's Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the PRC.

Though today the Silk Road frequently serves as a popular metaphor for East-West cultural exchange (as used, for example, by cellist YoYo Ma in his Silk Road Project), it no longer functions as the main trade route connecting China with the rest of the world. Beijing, however, continues to be one of several important hubs for international travel and trade, where hundreds of international diplomats, tourists, and businesspeople arrive daily. Beijing continues to be a cosmopolitan city in a contemporary way; for example, many Western-style nightclubs and bars are found around the city featuring the latest DJs flown in from the West and Japan to cater to an international clientele living in Beijing. Concerts of classical Western music and jazz are a regular feature in Beijing's cultural scene, and appearances on the Beijing concert stage by internationally renowned musicians such as YoYo Ma and Itzhak Perlman are by no means rare. Furthermore, the city boasts two fine music academies. One of them, the Central Conservatory of Music, regularly produces many international award-winning string and piano players and opera singers. For example, the pianist Lang Lang, internationally popular—and perhaps controversial—for his flamboyant virtuosity, is a product of the Central Conservatory of Music, from which he went on to
continue his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Less-glamorous career opportunities for students of the Conservatory are offered by the many tourist hotels who desire to create an elegant atmosphere with background music for their guests.

In terms of demography, Beijing is a microcosm of China. Its inhabitants come from every one of the twenty-one provinces of China. People from virtually every one of the fifty-six nationalities are also well represented. Today's visitors to Beijing can taste many different kinds of cuisine and snacks not only of the Han majority but of other minority nationalities as well. For example, several restaurants in Beijing serve typical Uyghur food, such as lamb kabob, flat bread called nan, and a delicious pulao rice dish mixed with lamb and carrot. A restaurant I enjoy going to in the northwestern part of the city frequently has performances by Uyghur musicians and dancers from Kasghar (or Kashe) of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Beijing also has a sizable Mongolian population, and more than 200 of the best musicians from the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region currently reside in Beijing. Whenever I am in Beijing, I often join my friend, Professor Chogjin, in visiting a Mongolian nightclub, where we can listen to both traditional and popular music performed by these musicians while enjoying a bottle of strong Mongolian liquor with some tasty snacks.

Among the musical attractions of contemporary Beijing is Peking Opera. Indeed, a visit to a performance of Peking Opera has become a regular feature for organized group tours to Beijing, together with a dinner of the famous Peking duck. Big tour groups are mostly likely to be taken to the Liyuan Theater (Pear Garden, or Liyuan, is a metaphor for theater). Built inside a modern tourist hotel situated south of the Forbidden City in an area called the Xuanwu district, which was the birthplace of Peking Opera, the Liyuan Theater has an audience capacity of 600 and a modern proscenium stage, but its seating arrangement is modeled after that of traditional Chinese theaters with square tea tables surrounded by several seats facing the stage. Tea and snacks such as peanuts and watermelon seeds are served, just as in olden times. The usual program for an international audience consists of several scenes with acrobatic displays and mock fighting, but very little singing, which is one of the most important elements of Peking Opera. But because the acrobatic displays are so spectacular in Peking Opera, they provide an attractive introduction to this many-faceted and sophisticated theater. When a performance troupe from Beijing, led by China's foremost Peking Opera actor Mr. Mei Lanfang, toured San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., in the early twentieth century, reporters named the theatrical style Peking Opera. In China, however, this theater is known as jingju, that is, theater of the capital. First formulated in the capital city around the mid-eighteenth century, this theater drew its musical and dramatic elements from several older theaters that were current in Beijing at that time but were first developed in
other parts of China. After several decades of performing in Beijing, the actors of these theaters from outside Beijing learned from one another, and after a period of such cross-fertilization, a new theater emerged, which is what we know as jingju today. At first, jingju was shunned by the Han educated class because of its popular origin and its lack of sophistication, but the common people in Beijing took to it right away because of the liveliness of its plots—which are presented in easy-to-understand vernacular language—and the exciting rhythmic drive provided by a battery of percussion that includes drums and clapper, gongs, and cymbals. Soon jingju also gained the favor of the Manchu imperial household, particularly its female members, and this patronage by rulers of the Qing dynasty gave much prestige to jingju and helped to overcome the disdain of the Han intellectual class. With the active participation of educated Han and Manchu men to remold jingju into a more sophisticated theater, it soon gained a dominant position not only in Beijing but also in other parts of China.

For more than a hundred years jingju dominated the national theater until the advent of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a complicated, xenophobic, and ultimately ruinous period in modern Chinese history when a group of radicals—encouraged by the late chairman of the PRC, Mao Zedong—ravaged China with continuous and violently destructive political campaigns. This is not the place to discuss the Cultural Revolution; suffice it to say that jingju—together with many other traditional musical genres—was almost destroyed during this period because it was considered to be the cultural product of an old and discredited society. The musicians, actors, and producers connected with these old cultural products became objects of persecution, and many were killed or committed suicide. Although jingju was not completely destroyed by the Cultural Revolution, the end result of its having being silenced for ten years was that the generation who grew up during that period were never exposed to it and hence were totally ignorant of it. Without a knowledgeable native audience today, jingju's chances of survival have been greatly weakened.

In 1978, a new, more rational leadership took control of the government, immediately eradicated most of the radical policies, and restored stability to Chinese society. To save China from the danger of bankruptcy brought about by the policies of the Cultural Revolution, the new leadership encouraged foreigners to invest in China by establishing business concerns and manufacturing enterprises. These policies, still in effect today some twenty years after the Cultural Revolution, have transformed China, in economic terms, from a backward and uniform society to one that is diverse and stratified and is now one of the manufacturing powerhouses of the world. Culturally, this new leadership advocates a policy of diversity and encourages a revival of many of the venerable traditions discarded by the radicals, including jingju. This open-door policy has not only ushered in foreign investments but foreign culture as well.
Pop songs, particularly those from the United States, Hong Kong (which became an integral part of China in 1997), and Taiwan, were among the first cultural products to arrive in China. The younger generation of Chinese who came of age after the Cultural Revolution (which makes up more than 35 percent of China's current population) are avid consumers of foreign pop culture. Since the early 1990s, however, homegrown Chinese pop songs have begun to take over a significant part of the pop song market. Today, if visitors to Beijing wander into its record stores, they are likely to find only pop song recordings.

So, imagine my surprise during a visit to Beijing in May, 2006, when I wandered into the New Dongan Mall—a huge complex that would not be out of place in St. Paul, Minnesota—and I heard the sound of drum, cymbals, and gongs that reminded me of the percussion music of jingju. I thought to myself: "Could it really be live music? No, it must be a recording." Nonetheless, I followed the source of the sound and found myself in a little teahouse that also sells souvenirs. Poking my head in, I saw a small stage at one end of the shop on which a man was standing and singing an aria of jingju, although he was in simple street dress and not the elaborate makeup and costume used for theatrical performance. On stage right there was an instrumental ensemble made up of bowed and plucked strings and percussion accompanying the singing. I immediately recognized that this was a traditional qing chang (singing without staging, costume, and makeup) performance, usually participated in by talented jingju fans. I could not quite believe what I saw and heard in such an unlikely setting, but I hurriedly went inside, found a chair placed next to a tea table, and joined about twenty other people who were listening attentively.

Soon a woman came to serve me a cup of tea together with a big thermos of hot water for making more tea and a dish of peanuts and asked me to give her 10 yuan (Chinese currency, 10 yuan being equivalent to about US$1.20) as tea money and entrance fee. I did and settled down to survey my surroundings. I noticed there was a red colored wooden board on the back of the stage, with two gold color Chinese characters "fu" and "shon" (meaning, respectively, happiness and longevity) engraved on it. A microphone was in the center of the stage. A half dozen of instrumentalists sat on stage right. Suddenly I heard sounds of enthusiastic applause, as a dignified-looking middle-aged woman stepped onto the stage, followed by a man who carried with him a jinghu fiddle, the chief melodic instrument for jingju. As she stepped onto the center of the stage, she pushed away the microphone, walked to the back of the stage, and waited. The jinghu player who was originally among the instrumentalists stood up and deferentially gave his seat to the newly arrived player. I noticed that both the woman and the fiddle player assumed a very confident air, and the audience became very hushed and waited with anticipation.
The fiddle player began an introduction to a jingju aria called *nan ban zi* from the famous jingju excerpt, "*Bawang Bie ji*" ("The King's Farewell to his Concubine"), the signature aria of the famous jingju actor Mei Lanfang, who was a consummate female impersonator for the *dan* role (principal female character). As the fiddle introduction came to a certain point, the woman singer walked toward the front of the stage in elegant, mincing steps typical of the *dan* role while raising one hand expressively and started to sing. The vocal melody was full of elaborate and subtle ornaments punctuated with irregular syncopated rhythm, but the fiddle matched the intricacy of the vocal line and the articulation of the singer faithfully; periodically the vocal part came to a rest, and the fiddle provided brief interludes until the vocal part resumed. I then noticed that the teahouse had become very full—standing room only—and all listened with rapt attention. When the rendition finally came to a close, the audience broke into loud applause and called out "*Haol*" an equivalent of "Bravo!" in Chinese.

Realizing that the performers must be well known, I leaned over to my neighbor and asked: "Who are the performers?"

"Don't you know?" he replied. "She is a famous professional jingju actress of the *dan* role, now in retirement, and the fiddle player has been her personal accompanist for years!"

"Who are the usual performers here, then?" I inquired.

"Anybody who loves jingju and can sing its arias or play instruments. Most are just amateurs who are fans of jingju, but occasionally professionals come too, like today The gathering occurs daily here from 3 to 6 P.M. and the venue is provided by the city government, which also pays salaries for a group of instrumentalists and for two service persons to take care of the place and audience. This place was just opened six months ago, and I really hope it can be maintained."

The next singer to step onto the stage was a middle-aged man who told the instrumentalists what he wanted to sing, and then the fiddle began an introductory passage. Somewhat bashful and timid at first, he soon warmed up and starting to sing with gusto, if not with expertise. The audience laughed and encouraged him by clapping the rhythm with him; when he got stuck with an intricate rhythmic passage, someone from the audience sang the passage aloud to help him out.

The next person on stage was a very fashionably dressed woman with dved blond hair and wearing a pair of high heels. When she opened her mouth to sing, out came a very powerful masculine low voice, and I realized that she was a practitioner of the principal old male role called *lao sheng* (old man), and she was very good. So the audience rewarded her with "*Hao!*"
In jingju, the gender of the performer is not necessarily the gender of the character he/she portrays.

I stayed on altogether for a couple of hours. The teahouse was noisy not only because of the percussion but also because people talked loudly with one another, as it was also a place to socialize. Most of the audience smoked, and cell phones rang incessantly. But I was thankful that a piece of old Beijing had managed to come back in this age of globalizing uniformity.

**MUSIC OF THE HAN NATIONALITY**

Traditional music of the Han nationality includes many types of instrumental music (solo and ensemble), musical narratives, musical theaters, and folk songs of different regions. In the following sections I will discuss a few representative types: music for a seven-stringed zither called *qin* (pronounced "chin"), one of China's most venerable instruments; music for a four-stringed lute called *pipa*, an instrument imported to China through the Silk Road; and finally, music of the jingju theater.

**THE QIN AND ITS MUSIC**

The *qin* is the most highly regarded of Chinese musical instruments because of its antiquity and its rich legacy of associations with scholars and poets. It is made from a hollowed board approximately four feet long and three inches deep and with a convex curve to its top. The *qin* has seven strings of varying thickness stretched over the entire length of the board. Its body is painted with layers of dark lacquer, and although it has neither frets nor bridges, it does have thirteen studs or position markers called *hui*, which are made of mother-of-pearl or other semiprecious material and are embedded along the outer edge of the instrument to indicate finger positions for stopping the strings (i.e., pressing a string against the body of the instrument to shorten its length and thereby change its pitch).

The open strings are usually tuned C-D-F-G-A-c-d. The flat, smooth underside of the instrument has two openings called "sound pools," and it is usually engraved with the name of the owner and the given name of the instrument, indicating that the *qin* is a highly personalized instrument.

*Qin* playing involves various ways of plucking the strings with the thumb, index, middle, and ring fingers of the right hand (the little finger, which is called *jinzhi*, or "forbidden finger," is not used) and stopping them with the four fingers of the left hand (the little finger is again not used). Using these techniques, a *qin* player can produce many different types of ornaments, including vibrato (slight rising and falling in pitch), portamenti (slides from one pitch to
another), and harmonics (bell-like tones produced when a string vibrates in segments rather than as a single length).

Around the sixth century C.E., detailed explanations were written describing the techniques required for producing each and every sound on the qin; this kind of notation, called tablature, is known as *wenzipu* (prose tablature). Later, in the Tang dynasty (618-906 C.E.), a new type of tablature was created that consisted of clusters of abbreviated symbols derived from Chinese characters; these specified the string number, the stopping positions, and the hand, finger, and direction of plucking. This tablature is called *jianzipu* (abbreviated-character tablature), and its evolved form is still in use today.

Throughout Chinese history, the qin has been associated with sages and scholars (male only), giving it a special place in Chinese life and culture. The earliest mention of the qin is found in the *Shujing* (Book of History, compiled c. sixth century B.C.E.). Learning the qin was already a requirement for scholars and gentlemen before the third century B.C.E. At that time, however, the qin was employed primarily to accompany poetry recitation, as a member of the large
orchestra for the court ceremonial music known as yayue (elegant music), or to form a duet with the se (a twenty-stringed plucked zither). A duo of qin and se symbolized a harmonious spousal relationship or friendship. After the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.-290 C.E.), as ceremonial music at court gradually declined, the qin emerged as both a solo instrument and the accompanying instrument for chamber vocal genres. During the end of the Han period and thereafter, the literati initiated the scholarly study of the qin and wrote compositions specifically for the solo qin, and thus its status and prestige were enhanced. In the subsequent periods of the Sui and Tang dynasties and the Five Dynasties (581-618, 618-907, 907-960), the playing of qin and qin scholarship were restricted to court circles only; outside the court, the qin was neglected.

It was not until the Song dynasty (960-1027) that there was a renaissance of qin music. An ideological system for the qin was developed by fusing Confucian philosophy with Daoist (Taoist) and Buddhist mystical symbolism. According to this ideology, the playing of the qin is an act of contemplation, self-purification, and self-regulation; hence, it should be played in private, amid charming scenery, under pine trees and beside running creeks, in the privacy of one's garden, or in the cloister of one's own library with incense burning.

The qin vogue among the scholars reached its height in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), when numerous treatises and handbooks were printed. But in the early twentieth century, rapid social change brought about a sharp decline in interest in the instrument. The number of talented performers dropped to just a handful, and scholarship came to a virtual halt. After the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, under government encouragement, research in qin music and its history was revived, particularly during the 1950s. In recent years, the qin has been brought into the new context of the modern concert stage, and with the appearance of a younger generation of qin virtuosi, interest in the qin has grown among members of the educated circle. Among the general populace, however, the qin, with its associations with past literary and philosophical traditions, is too exclusive and inaccessible and has therefore been largely neglected.

The earliest extant qin manuscript, dating from the Tang dynasty, contains the composition "Youlan" ("Orchids in a Secluded Valley"), which is written in prose tablature. The first printed qin handbook, the Shenqi mipu (The Mysterious Secret Handbook), compiled by Prince Zhu Quan of Ming, appeared in 1425 and was followed by numerous other woodblock handbooks, together comprising more than three thousand compositions notated in the abbreviated-character tablature. Only about eighty pieces, however, have survived in the oral performance tradition.
In qin handbooks, tempo is indicated by terms such as "Slow down," or "Speed up," but durational symbols are totally absent. These omissions indicate the importance placed on oral tradition and the realization and interpretation of the music by the performing artist. A process of reconstructing ancient pieces from qin tablature through the aid of oral tradition is called *dapu* (literally, "to obtain from the notation"). This process of reconstruction (i.e., realizing the qin tablature into actual sounds by a qin player) has become a venerable tradition. Qin meters vary among free meter, duple meter, and sometimes triple meter, often within the same piece.

Qin notation is very difficult to read, even for those who are literate and cultivated, and this contributes to its exclusive nature. In the famous eighteenth-century novel *The Story of the Stone* (also known as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*) by Cao Xueqin (d. 1763), a passage conveys this well. This greatest of Chinese novels depicts in meticulous detail life in a very wealthy and influential family, in particular the love and fate of the hero, Jia Baoyu, and his cousin, Lin Daiyu, two extremely talented, cultivated, and precocious teenagers. In Chapter 86, Baoyu seeks Daiyu out in her quarters and learns something about qin tablature and its philosophy, although his wry concluding comment seems to indicate he takes it all with a grain of salt:

Daiyu was sitting at her desk reading. Baoyu approached her, saying cheerfully, "I see that you left Grandmother's place early." Daiyu responded with a smile and said, "Well, you wouldn't speak to me, so why should I stay any longer?"

"There were so many people there, I didn't have a chance." As he replied he tried to see what she was reading, but he couldn't recognize a single word. Some looked like the character for "azalea," some looked like the character for "hazy." Another had the radical "big" on the left, the character for "nine" next to it, and a large hook underneath it with the character for "five" written inside. . . .

Baoyu was curious and puzzled. He said, "Sister, I am more and more impressed by you. You must be reading a secret Book of Heaven!"

Daiyu couldn't help laughing. "Here is an educated man! Don't tell me you have never seen a musical score!"

"Of course I have," he replied, "but I don't know any of those characters. Why don't you teach me to read some of it? . . . For example, what do you make of this character 'big' with that long hook and a character 'five' stuck in the middle?"
With a laugh Daiyu replied, "This character 'big' and the character 'nine' mean that you press on the ninth stud with your left thumb, and this big hook with the character 'five' inside means that you hook inward the fifth string with your right hand. This whole cluster is not a word; it stands for a musical note. There is really nothing to it. You have also many kinds of left-hand techniques such as the quick vibrato, broad vibrato, upward glide, downward glide, trill, quick glide, and so forth."

Baoyu was hopping with joy, saying, "Come on, dear sister, since you know so much about it, why don't we try it out?"

"It is said that the zither is synonymous with the word for self-restraint. The ancients intended it to be used for discipline, for tranquilizing one's emotions, and for suppressing excessive and frivolous desires. In playing the zither, you must select a quiet and secluded place. It could be in the top story of a building, in the forest among the rocks, at a mountain precipice, or at the edge of the water. The weather should be calm, with a light breeze or a clear moon. You have to burn some incense and meditate for a while. . . .

"As to the performance itself, the fingering and the intonation have to be good enough . . . the position of your heart should be in a line with the fifth stud on the instrument. . . . Now you are ready, bodily, and spiritually."

Baoyu said, "Can't we just do it for fun? It's next to impossible if we have to go through all that rigmarole!" Adapted from a translation by Rulan Chao Pian.

Practically all qin compositions have programmatic titles either deriving from common poetic and mystical images or alluding to Chinese history or legends. The titles serve to evoke a mood or atmosphere familiar to the Chinese.

LISTENING GUIDE

**LISTEN: "LIU SHUI" ("FLOWING WATER")** Played by Professor Wu Wenguang, on the qin.

*Liu Shui* ("Flowing Water") is a famous composition for the qin. The performer is Professor Wu Wenguang of the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing, the foremost qin player in China today. Wu Wenguang studied the qin under his late father, the famous qin master Professor Wu Jingle, and this performance is based on his 1960 interpretation of the tablature notated in a handbook dated 1876, entitled *Tian Wen Ge Qinpu (Tian Wen Ge Studio Qin Handbook)*. It is a rhapsodic piece of descriptive music portraying a waterfall cascading from a mountaintop, falling through various levels of rock, and then becoming a rapids, eventually running out to the sea.
The composition of "Flowing Water" is attributed to Boya, a great qin master who lived during the Spring and Autumn period (771–476 B.C.E.). Boya’s friend, Zhong Ziqi, was an attentive and imaginative listener to Boya’s music. As the story goes, when Boya played the piece "Flowing Water" and conjured up the scene of a high mountain in his mind, Zhong Ziqi right away got the idea and said: "Ah! I am thinking of Mount Tai (China’s tallest and most sacred mountain)." When Boya thought of flowing water as he played, Zhong Ziqi echoed his thought and said: "How excellent!—broadly flowing rivers and streams."

When Zhong Ziqi died sometime later, Boya felt that nobody could match his understanding of the music he played and so he broke his qin and never played again. Thus, the deeper meaning of this piece is as a symbol of deep friendship. From this story arose the phrase "zhī yīn" literally meaning "a good friend who understands my music," and it is still popularly used today to signify profound friendship.

0:00-0:43 Sanqi: Melody played with much use of portamento, some pitches reinforced by lower octave; in free rhythm

0:44-1:10 More regular rhythm with melody in harmonics

1:11-2:26 Rudiao: Melody in normal pitches with faster tempo and wide, sweeping portamenti

2:27-4:33 Ruman: Melody and portamenti are embedded in a strumming accompaniment produced by sweeping across all strings, culminating at 3:37 in a noisy strummed portamento that dissipates in a decrescendo and diminuendo to 4:33

4:34-5:52 Passage of harmonics, proceeding to strumming style of preceding section and again concluding with a return to a simple melody played on normal pitches (fuqi)

5:33-end Weisheng: Final coda, played on harmonics

A typical qin composition usually contains several sections:

1. **Sanqi** (introduction): Begins slowly in free rhythm. Its function is to introduce the principle notes of the mode used in the piece.

2. **Rudiao** (entering the music, or exposition): The meter is established, and the principal motives of the piece are introduced, which are then varied by means of extension, reduction, and changes in timbre, tempo, and register. This part is usually the longest and musically the most substantial.

3. **Ruman** (becoming slower): the principal motives undergo farther rhythmic variation, and modulation to other keys may occur. In some larger compositions, motivic materials occurring in the second part may be restated and reinterpreted here; this is called *fuqi* (restatement).
4. **Weisheng** (tail sounds): A short coda concludes the composition. The coda, always played in harmonics and in a slackening tempo, reiterates the important notes used in the composition.

**THE PI’PA AND ITS MUSIC**

The *pipa* is a four-stringed, fretted lute with a bent neck and a pear-shaped body. The prototype of this instrument, which had five strings, was imported to China from present-day Kucha (known in ancient China as Guici), which was one of the largest of the thirty-six ancient Uyghur kingdoms, and in 91 C.E. it was under the suzerainty of the Han. By the fourth century, the Kuchan Kingdom of Guici was an important center for Buddhist learning imported from India, as well as the center for Central Asian trade and Indo-European culture, as trade routes running across the Taklamakan intersected with the Silk Road at Kucha. Today Kucha is still a major town in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in the PRC.

From numerous written accounts (in both Chinese and Uyghur) and the iconographic evidence found in the frescos of many Buddhist grottos along the Silk Road, we can surmise that the five-stringed pipa—which was held horizontally and played with a plectrum—originated in Guici (Kucha), from where it traveled east to Han China and west to Persia and Arabia; because of this, it was often called the Guici pipa. By the Sui and the Tang periods (respectively 581-618 and 618-905), when Han China entered one of its most cosmopolitan epochs, music and dance from Guici—featuring the pipa either as the principal solo instrument or as a member of an instrumental ensemble—formed an important repertory for refined entertainment at court and in homes of aristocrats and wealthy people. The pipa thus became extremely popular in Tang China, and
many noted Guici musicians gained employment at court and in the homes of the wealthy. After the five-string Guici pipa was adapted in China, it underwent transformation and evolved into a four-stringed instrument, although it was still played with the plectrum. This form of Guici-inspired entertainment music, known in China as yan yue (banquet entertainment music), was imported to Japan around the Tang period. There it became part of the repertory of Japanese court music known as gagaku (elegant music), and the four-stringed pipa, played with a plectrum, also went to Japan at the same time and became known as biwa.

After the Tang period, the pipa became an instrument for courtesans who were well trained in music and dance, and because of this, the pipa has been associated with artistic entertainments, gaiety, and romance. In a famous long poem entitled “Pipa Xing’’ ("The Song for the Pipa"), the famous Tang dynasty poet Bo Ju-I (772-846) provided a vivid description of a pipa performance by a courtesan:

**Pipa Xing (Song of the Pipa)**

... The lowest string hummed like pouring rain;  
The higher strings whispered as lover’s pillow talk.

Humming and whispering intermingled  
Like the sound of big and small pearls gradually falling into a jade plate.

Sometimes it sounded like liquid chirping of orioles hidden among flowers;
Sometimes it sounded like a brook sobbing sadly running through a sand bank.

A strong sweep across the strings sounded as though they had been broken
And the notes suddenly died down.

The music became a lament expressing the deepest sorrow;
The silence revealed more emotion than the actual sound.

Suddenly it sounded as if a silver vase had broken, and the water gushed forth,
Or as if armoured horses and weapons were loudly clashing.

Then, before she laid down her plectrum, she ended the music with one stroke
Sweeping all four strings boldly and making a sound like the rending of silk. . . .

(Translated by Isabel Wong)

Chinese written records show that in subsequent periods until the mid-Ming period (around the fifteenth century), the pipa was still played with a plectrum and held horizontally by the player. It was only since the late fifteenth century that the pipa has been held upright on the player's crossed knees and played with the fingers.

The modern pipa has twenty-three to twenty-five frets placed along the neck and the soundboard of the instrument; the four strings are usually tuned to A-d-e-a, and a complete chromatic scale can be produced. The pipa player employs a large variety of playing techniques, the most distinctive of which are

- **Harmonics**
- **Tremolo**, produced by rapidly and continuously plucking a string with all five fingers consecutively
- **Portamento** (sliding from note to note), produced by deflection of a string before or after it has been plucked
- **Percussive pizzicato**, produced when a string is plucked violently enough to cause it to snap against the body of the instrument
- **Percussive strumming** of all four strings

The music of the pipa, characterized by flexible tempi and frequent alternation between softer and louder passages, encompasses many moods ranging from the contemplative and the
lyrical to the heroic and even to the comical. Chinese musicians divide the pipa repertory into two categories according to structure: the "big pieces" and the "small pieces." "Big pieces" are usually quite long and are of three kinds:

1) Continuous (not divided into sections)
2) Divided into many sections that follow a theme and variation structure with themes derived from preexistent materials
3) Divided into many sections that alternate songlike with percussive material
4) "Small pieces" are usually quite short, each containing about sixty to one hundred beats or so. Most of these pieces are in sectional form.

Pieces in the traditional pipa repertory are also divided into the wen (lyrical) and the wu (martial) categories. Wen category pieces are expressive in nature and in a slow or moderate tempo, and they tend to employ various kinds of finger techniques to produce embellishments and microtonal ornaments. Wu category pieces tend to be percussive, loud, and in fast tempo—fast strumming techniques are often employed to produce a martial effect.

Sectional pipa pieces, be they "big" or "small," firequendy employ a rondo-variation principle in which basic melodic material returns periodically, but in a more improvisational manner than is usual in the Western rondo or variation form.

Pipa pieces often have programmatic titles, and some of these contain clearly descriptive musical elements directly related to their titles; others, however, are more abstract and have only a poetic relationship to their titles.

LISTENING GUIDE

LISTEN: “The Great Ambushcade”

A programmatic solo piece for pi’pa that depicts a great battle scene.

Notation for the instrument, again a kind of tablature, combines symbols indicating pitches of the diatonic scale and an additional set of symbols indicating various finger techniques. There are approximately a dozen printed collections of music for the pipa, the earliest of which dates from the early nineteenth century. Prior to that time, music for pipa circulated in manuscripts, some of which still exist today. Notation has always been a secondary aid for the transmission of the repertory, as it exists primarily in oral tradition.
In traditional society, the pipa was usually performed in an intimate surrounding, either in a private banquet or in a teahouse. Nowadays, the pipa continues to be a popular instrument, with many young virtuosi being trained in conservatories, but performances usually take place in a modern concert hall.

WINDS AND STRINGS ENSEMBLE IN SHANGHAI

Shanghai, China's commercial capital, is situated south of Beijing at the mouth of the Yangzi River. Part of modern Shanghai was built by the British in the mid-nineteenth century. Today, Shanghai is starting to take on the chic of Paris, the sophistication of New York, and the futuristic vibes of Tokyo. It already boasts the world's fastest train (a magnetic levitation train that takes less than eight minutes to run the thirty km from the Pudong international airport to the city), the longest underwater pedestrian tunnel (under the Huangpu river), and the world's tallest hotel—the 88-story Grand Hyatt. However, in some pockets of Shanghai, traditional modes of life are still carried on, and traditional kinds of music can still be heard there in appropriate surroundings.

One of these is the chamber ensemble of winds and strings called Jiangnan sizhu. Jiangnan, meaning "south of the river," is the designation for the Yangzi Delta region in southeastern China, of which Shanghai is a part. Si literally means "silk," and it denotes stringed instruments because strings used to be made of silk (nowadays they are usually made of steel for greater volume). Zhu literally means "bamboo," a material from which some wind instruments are made.

Jiangnan sizhu was formerly a favorite pastime of the gentry and educated classes of the urban centers in the Jiangnan region. There were many private clubs where people gathered to play and while away a pleasant afternoon or evening. As a rule, the performers of Jiangnan sizhu are amateurs who play for their own enjoyment. In Shanghai today there are still half a dozen or so Jiangnan sizhu clubs whose members are retired urban workers, some of whom belonged to the gentry class before 1949.

Jiangnan sizhu performances usually take place in neighborhood teahouses. The teahouse where I usually go to listen to Jiangnan sizhu is located in the Square of the Temple of the City God in the Old City of Shanghai, a picturesque area lined with many small shops selling all kinds of traditional wares and souvenirs. The old teahouse, always thronged with people, is an elegant structure built on an artificial lake teeming with goldfish, and it is approached via a zigzag footbridge. It is a hexagonal wooden building of two stories, lacquered with dark-brown paint and has intricate latticework windows open on all sides. It has double-tiered black tile roofs with elongated eaves swooping out in a complex pattern of upturned curves.
There is no entrance fee, but customers are required to pay a modest price for a pot of tea. The performance usually takes place in the afternoon when the players arrive one by one, place their instruments on a big table situated at one side of the teahouse, and then sit around it with the string players and the player of the drum and clapper in an inner circle and the rest in an outer one. The player of the drum and clapper (gu ban) serves as a conductor by beating time, and everybody plays from memory.
INSTRUMENTS IN THE JIANGNAN SIZHU ENSEMBLE

Strings ("Silk")
- One pipa (a pear-shaped, four-stringed plucked lute with a short, bent neck and twenty-three or twenty-five frets)
- One or two sonxion (a three-stringed lute with a long, fretless neck and an oval-shaped sound box)
- One qinqin (a two- or three-stringed plucked lute with a long, fretted neck).
- One or two erhu (two-stringed fiddles with hollow wooden cylindrical sound boxes having one side covered by snakeskin)
- One yangqin (a dulcimer struck with a pair of bamboo sticks)

Winds ("Bamboo")
- One dizi (a transverse bamboo flute with six finger holes, a mouth hole, and another hole covered by a thin membrane, which vibrates to give the instrument a reedy sound)
- One xiao (an end-blown bamboo flute with five frontal finger holes, one hole in the back, and a blowing hole on the top)
- One sheng (a free-reed mouth organ made of a series of bamboo pipes arranged in a circle, each with a reed in its lower end, and all inserted into a base made of copper, wood, or gourd, to which a mouthpiece is attached; two or more tones may be produced simultaneously on the instrument)

Percussion instruments
- A small flat drum called the gu and a paired wooden clapper called the ban (both played by one person)
- A muyu, or "wooden fish" (a carved, hollow, wooden instrument struck with a pair of wooden sticks)
- A pair of small handbells called pongzhong, which may be used in certain pieces in the repertory

There is no formal announcement of the program, nor are there program notes, because the audience is familiar with the small, anonymous repertory, which consists of only about two dozen pieces that all have descriptive titles. The first piece for the afternoon—played by the novices—is always short and slow, and more complex pieces are played as the afternoon progresses. Each piece usually lasts ten minutes or more, and some may be played more than once. After one piece is finished, some players may get up from the table, and others sitting among the customers may come up to join the performers, the most skillful and respected players joining in around 4:30 P.M. to perform pieces that are fast and require greater expertise.
LISTENING GUIDE

LISTEN: HUA SAN LIU ("EMBELLISHED THREE-SIX ")

The beginning and conclusion of the first part of this piece are played. Instruments include dizi, transverse flute; yangqin, hammer dulcimer; pipa, four-string, plucked lute; erhu, two-string fiddle.

0:00-0:29 Introduction: In free rhythm, dizi stands out because of distinctive timbre and greater ornamentation

0:30-1:30 Melody now in regular meter; listen for slight differences in ornamentation and tuning among the different instruments; fades at 1:30-1:33

1:39-2:05 Fades into end of first section in faster tempo

2:05-2:45 Dizi jumps to upper register while other two instruments continue to play the melody in the usual range; concluding ritard just before ending

When the novices are not playing, they usually sit around the big table listening to and watching the more skilled players. There is no formal instruction, as learning is entirely by imitation, and when novices are considered ready to play, the more skilled players will give them criticism or suggestions.

Like most traditional Chinese instrumental music, Jiangnan sizhu pieces like "Hua San Liu" always begin slowly and gradually accelerate, ending in a fast tempo. Although the drum-and-clapper player is supposed to provide the beat for the music, the players typically are not overly concerned with rhythmic exactitude.

As in other pieces of Jiangnan sizhu, in "Hua San Liu" all the instruments play together most of the time. The overall fuzzy timbral quality of this purely melodic music is attributable not only to the combination of plucked and bowed strings with winds but also to the fact that they play in a relatively high register and use several slightly different tunings.

When I first heard Jiangnan sizhu music, I could discern no break within a given piece; it seemed to me that, once started, it went on without break until the end. I later found out that every piece is divided into sections, but because the end of a section is always overlapped by the beginning of the next, a piece usually gives the impression of being seamless.

Another characteristic of Jiangnan sizhu is the extensive use of improvised embellishments on the basic melody. Every melodic instrument plays the same basic melody, but each player applies the improvised embellishments according to the conventions of his instrument, creating a complicated texture of het-erophony, which—like the variations in tuning—adds to
the fuzzy or thick quality of the melody. Because of this freedom in adding improvised embellishments, no two performances of one piece are exactly alike, and the more skilled the performers, the greater the differences may be.

One of the most important features of Jiangnan sizhu is the use of a technique of structural expansion known as "fangman jiahua" ("making slow and adding flowers"), in which the musical materials are expanded by slowing down the tempo of the original melody, and as the notes of the original melody become further apart temporally, other notes are inserted, or interpolated. The result is a new piece that may have sixteen or more notes corresponding to each note of the original melody.

As I mentioned before, the teahouse where Jiangnan sizhu is performed is always noisy, as the customers chat among themselves or come and go. The players are oblivious to the commotion, and in fact, when some of them are not playing, they also chat with their friends! Jiangnan sizhu, like much other traditional Chinese music of a popular nature, is considered a kind of background music to enhance the ambience of a pleasant social environment.

THE JINGJU THEATER

At the beginning of this chapter I described a performance of the nonstaged variety of Jingju in a teahouse/gift shop in Beijing. Before the Cultural Revolution, staged performances of Jingju by professional actors used to take place daily, but nowadays, these performances do not take place very often, except as tourist attractions, which nevertheless may help stimulate a revival of the art among native connoisseurs.

As theater, Jingju is a conglomeration of the dramatic presentation of plots using music, speech, stylized gestures and dance movements, acrobatics, mock combat scenes, and fanciful makeup and elaborate costumes. Personages of Jingju are divided into four main categories and their subcategories according to sex, age, social status, and character. Each role type is defined by the costume and makeup the actor wears and the prescribed physical movements of each. All the characters sing, but each employs distinct vocal techniques, timbres, and singing styles.

The four main categories of actors are sheng (male role, divided into old male, young male, and warrior subcategories); dan (female role, divided into old female, young refined female, young flirtatious female, and female warrior subcategories); jing (painted face, a rough or heroic male role whose face is painted with intricate colored patterns); and chou (a male comic role).
“Sheng” (male), “chou” and “jing” roles:

Warrior male

Young male

Male comic: “chou”

Old male

Painted face: “jing”
“Dan” (female) roles:

- Old female: “laodan”
- Warrior female: “daomadan”
- Virtuous woman: “qingyi”
- Flirtaceous woman: “huadan”
The basic musical elements of jingju are **arias, heightened speech, and instrumental music.** Instrumental music in jingju has many functions. The first and foremost is to accompany the singing and the physical movements and dance. To an audience familiar with the conventional musical code of jingju, it may also describe a dramatic situation and action, indicate the spatial dimension of the setting, convey the moods and psychological makeup of characters, and provide a soundscape or sound effects connected with a particular dramatic moment. With such musical clues, an educated jingju audience will be able to form a mental picture of the temporal and spatial aspects of the drama and respond to them with appropriate emotion and understanding.

The instrumental ensemble is made up of two components: the melodic, or **wenchang** (civic instrumentation) ensemble, and the percussion, or **wuchang** (military instrumentation) ensemble. In the musical communication of information, the percussion ensemble plays a more important function than the melodic group. The percussion ensemble also provides rhythmical punctuation for movements and singing, and it serves to combine all the discrete elements of a play musical as well as gestural, into a complete whole.

The percussion ensemble is made up principally of five instruments: **danpigu** (a single-headed drum), danpigu and ban are played by one person, who functions as the conductor), **daluo** (a big gong that produces a falling pitch), **xiaoluo** (a small gong that produces a rising pitch), and **naoba** (a small pair of cymbals). In addition, a few other percussion instruments are used for special effects: **datangu** (a big barrel drum), **xiaotangu** (a small barrel drum), several other gongs and cymbals of different sizes, a muyu (a "wooden-fish" slit drum), and a pair of small handbells.

The music of the percussion ensemble includes some sixty conventional rhythmic patterns, each of which is identified by a proper name and a specific syllabic pattern. The five principal instruments are combined in different ways to indicate different kinds of dramatic situations, atmospheres, or moods. The three basic percussion combinations are

1. A trio made up of the big gong, the small gong, and the cymbal, with the big gong as the principal instrument. This combination is usually employed in scenes of pageantry featuring a big crowd of actors and also in dramatic scenes that require strong emphasis.

2. A duo made up of the cymbal, as the principal instrument, and the small gong. This combination usually accompanies tragic scenes.
3. A small gong solo. This is generally used in scenes of a tranquil or lyrical nature.

Besides these basic combinations, other additional combinations include a duo of the big and small barrel drums (used in acrobatic and fighting scenes), a duo of the small gong and the big cymbal (played in a specific way to indicate underwater and thunder sounds), and so forth. The sixty or so named conventional percussion patterns, each requiring different instrumental combinations and varying tempi, perform many functions. These include indicating entrances and exits of dramatic personages and their social status; emphasizing a word, phrase, or name of a person or place; accompanying fights and battles; and producing special sound effects. The sixty or so named conventional percussion patterns, each requiring different instrumental combinations and varying tempi, perform many functions. These include indicating entrances and exits of dramatic personages and their social status; emphasizing a word, phrase, or name of a person or place; accompanying fights and battles; and producing special sound effects. The sixty or so named conventional percussion patterns, each requiring different instrumental combinations and varying tempi, perform many functions. These include indicating entrances and exits of dramatic personages and their social status; emphasizing a word, phrase, or name of a person or place; accompanying fights and battles; and producing special sound effects.

The melodic ensemble features mostly strings and winds, as well as a set of ten small, suspended pitched gongs called the *yunluo*. The strings are the *jinghu* (the leading melodic instrument, a two-stringed bamboo, spike fiddle with a very high and piercing pitch), the *erhu*, the *yue qin* (a four-stringed plucked lute with a round sound box), a *sanxian*, and a *ruan* (a large plucked lute with a round sound box). The winds are the *dizi* transverse flute, the *sheng* (mouth organ), and the big and small *suona* (conical double-reed oboes).

The primary functions of the melodic ensemble are to play introductions and interludes for arias, to double aria melodies, and to play incidental music for dance and miming movements, but the strings and the winds perform somewhat different functions. The strings, with the *jinghu* as their principal instrument, accompany the two main types of arias known as the *xipi* and the *erhuang*, which were derived from some folk predecessors of jingju. In addition, the strings play various incidental pieces—all of which have proper names—to accompany some miming movements such as sweeping, changing clothes, putting on makeup, drinking wine, and walking, as well as to accompany scenes of banqueting and general pageantry, celebration, and dance. Each individual piece of named incidental music has an association with specific dramatic situations and moods, and each requires different playing techniques on the various strings for the production of varying volumes and timbres.

The winds—the *dizi* and the *sheng* only, without the *suona*—sometimes in combination with the *sanxian* and the *erhu*, accompany arias in scenes derived from the repertory of the older classical theater called *Kunqu*, another predecessor of the jingju, which uses the *dizi* as its principal melodic instrument. Kunqu-derived scenes are usually lyrical in nature, and in these scenes the *yunluo* gong set is also used. The winds are also used to accompany arias derived from folk tunes that have been absorbed into the jingju repertory. Furthermore, the winds play specific named incidental pieces to accompany dances derived from kunqu.

Finally, the big and small *suona* (obo) are always used in combination with the percussion ensemble exclusively to accompany arias sung by a chorus. Named incidental pieces specially
associated with scenes involving military maneuvers, fighting, marching, hunting, or processions are also played by the suona-and-percussion ensemble.

Only nine basic players are in the jingju ensemble, but the performers, who are very versatile, usually play more than one instrument. For example, in the percussion ensemble, the conductor, who plays both the single-headed drum and the clapper, also plays the big or small barrel drum. One person plays the various sizes of cymbals, and another plays the various sizes of gongs. In the melodic ensemble, the jinghu and erhu players also play the big cymbals when the music only involves the wind players, and sometimes they may have to play the suona and the dizi as well. The yue qin and sanxian players also play the suona, the dizi, the sheng, and even the yunluo or the barrel drums.

Vocal music in jingju comprises arias, recitative-like short phrases, and heightened speech, which is a type of stylized stage speech having steeply rising and falling contours that exaggerate the natural tonal contours of the Chinese language, in which the meaning of a word depends as much on its melodic contour and relative tessitura as on its particular arrangement of vowels and consonants. The arias express the lyrical sentiments of the character, whereas the recitative-like phrases and the heightened speech propel the narrative of the dramatic action. Heightened speech is used exclusively by important characters and characters of high social status, whereas everyday speech in the Peking dialect is used by the comics and characters of lower social status. In general, arias, recitatives, and speech are performed as solo numbers, but there are exceptions when these are done by an ensemble.

In jingju, the aural and visual elements are of equal importance. The conventions require that an actor should master highly stylized acting techniques as thoroughly as he or she does singing. Just as knowledgeable Chinese audiences would not excuse bad singing, neither would they excuse bad execution of movements on stage. For a jingju actor, the appearance demanded by his conventional role, his capacity for wearing the costume pertaining to it, and the scores of strictly defined movements and gestures are of vital importance. The actor is the focus of attention, the central point of that harmony of movement, which is the essence of a theatrical performance. The costumes are designed to assist and emphasize that movement, together with instrumental music, speech, and arias, all interdependent on one another.

Such a highly stylized and conventional theater requires an audience that possesses "the art of watching and listening" to appreciate it fully. Unfortunately, in recent decades audiences have been rapidly shrinking. The conventions of jingju are deeply rooted in an old society based on Confucian moral precepts and political outlook, and these ideals have been thoroughly discredited by the contemporary socialist state. It is small wonder that young people who have grown up in this state find the art archaic and alien; they prefer programs on television and
pop music. In recent years, the government has tried to remedy this situation by taking certain reform measures, which include the creation of libretti with modern themes, reorganizing troupes to streamline the companies, giving more financial incentives to able actors, and introducing electroacoustic instruments, but these measures appear to have met with little success.

Defined in terms of their rhythm, tempo, and corresponding dramatic functions, five main aria types are

1. The narrative aria in 4/4 meter and moderate tempo is usually used to provide narration in an unemotional manner.
2. The lyrical aria in 4/4 meter and slow tempo is used at lyrical moments and is usually melismatic.
3. The animated aria in measured rhythm and fast tempo is used to reveal a character's psychological state.
4. The dramatic aria in free rhythm, always accompanied by a steady beat from the clappers and the fiddle, is used to propel the dramatic action or to add tension to spoken dialogue.
5. The interjected aria, usually very short (only one phrase) and in free rhythm, is sung at a highly dramatic moment as a signal or a call.

These five melody-rhythm types are divided into more than ten categories, each of which has different melodic characteristics. The two most important ones are the xipi and the erhuang, which, respectively, derive from a northern and a southern regional theater. In addition, folk tunes of various regions and arias of kunqu have also been absorbed into jingju.

Arias in the erhuang category are in a moderate tempo and are usually employed in tragic or lyrical scenes; they employ a heptatonic scale with a raised fourth degree and a lowered seventh degree, usually used as neighboring or pivotal tones, and they serve to identify this type of aria. The first and last syllables of a phrase always start on the first beat of a measure in this aria type.

Xipi arias are rhythmically more varied and lively than those in the erhuang category and are used in a greater variety of dramatic situations. Xipi arias use both pentatonic and heptatonic scales, and so the jinghu is tuned differently from its tuning for erhuang.

In metered xipi arias, the articulation of the first syllable in each phrase always coincides with beat 3 of a measure, whereas that of the last syllable coincides with beat 1.
LISTENING GUIDE

PEKING OPERA ARIAS:

LISTEN: Narrative Aria

LISTEN: Dramatic Aria in free rhythm

LISTEN: Lyrical Aria

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSIC OF THE HAN PEOPLE

Although the Han people are relatively homogeneous in their cultural outlook and values, and all of them speak a number of related Sinitic languages that are known collectively as Chinese, the various dialects such as Putonghua (Mandarin), Wu, Xiang, Min, Hakka, and Yue (Cantonese) are mutually unintelligible when spoken. However, the use of a common written language and ideographic writing system enables all literate Chinese to communicate with each other. The existence of many regional styles of Chinese music reflects this diversity, too. Musically, each major linguistic region possesses its own vocal styles and forms. The major types of vocal music of the Han, such as musical narratives and musical theatricals, have been profoundly influenced by the linguistic characteristics of each region. According to Chinese statistics, there are about 317 regional dramatic genres in China today. Instrumental music is also regional in character; for example, the Jiangnan sizhu is predominantly a genre of the Jiangnan region, whereas the Fujian province in the south has its own instrumental ensemble style called the Fujian Nanqu, and the Guangdong province in the deep south has its own Guangdong Tmyue. Some of the same instruments, however, are used in most major instrumental ensembles, such as the dizi and the yangqin (dulcimer).

Despite the regional differences, some common stylistic characteristics result from extensive borrowing of musical styles from region to region. When a particular regional style such as the famous jingju becomes widely adopted throughout the country, a national style is formed.

The Value and Functions of Music

For centuries, the Chinese have equated enjoyment of music with the natural human desire for aesthetic and sensual gratification such as the taste for food, the need for sex, and the satisfaction of seeing beautiful things. Music has traditionally been treated as one of the component phenomena that make up an environment for living. Thus, music has not only served as a means of expressing emotions such as joy and sadness or as a vehicle for spiritual or religious contemplation, but it has also always been integrated into events such as rituals, banquets, weddings, funerals, festivals, harvest celebrations, and so forth. In addition, music
has always been conceived of as an integral part of other performing arts such as dance and drama. Furthermore, reference to some types of music has conventionally been used to evoke certain moods and atmospheres in literature, poetry, and painting. This complex and integral view of music and its functions had already become well established in the Zhou dynasty in the first millennium B.C.E.

Kong Fuzi, or Master Kong (551-479 B.C.E.), known to the West as Confucius, founded the school of philosophy (popularly called Confucianism) that had the greatest impact on subsequent Chinese thought. Confucius maintained that music has positive and negative powers to stimulate related behavior and desire. Positive music, or shi yin (proper sound), features the attributes of harmoniousness, peacefulness, and appropriateness; it is an important educational tool capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes. In contrast, the music he described as negative, or chi yue (extravagant music), had the attributes of inappropriate loudness (like thunder and lightning) and wanton noisiness and stimulated excessive and licentious behavior.

Confucius lived during the end of the Zhou period in a time of constant warfare and chaos. He hoped to restore China to the peaceful feudalism of the early Zhou years, but felt that the only way the hierarchical system could be made to work properly was for each person to correctly perform his assigned role. "Let the ruler be a ruler and the subjects be subjects," he said, but he added that to rule properly, a king must be a virtuous person, setting an example of proper ethical conduct. To Confucius, social stratification was a fact of life to be sustained by morality, not force. He greatly stressed the possibility of remolding men's minds through education (in which music and dance were important parts of the curriculum) and taught that proper inner attitudes could be inculcated through the practice of rituals (which, to be effective, must have proper ritual music) as well as through the observance of rules of etiquette and decorum.

In the twentieth century Mao Zedong (1893-1976), chairman of the Communist Party from 1949 to 1976, like Confucius, viewed music and the arts as important educational tools. But Mao's practical application of this view was vastly different from that of the Confucianists. To Mao, music and the arts were important tools in the propagation of state ideology. Couched in the language of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by Mao, the state ideology plays a key political role in the People's Republic; it defines, explains, and rationalizes the whole range of human activities and thinking in the society. Endowed with the sanctity of unchallenged truth, the state ideology constitutes the basis and substance of political values and is buttressed by the fullest extent of coercive power inherent in a sovereign political system. Few in China are able to ignore the all-pervasive influence of ideology. Propagation of ideology is a premier function of the Communist Party acting on behalf of the state, and music and the arts are important components of this propaganda machine.
Mao, like Confucius, also defined music as divided into proper and improper kinds. The proper or "correct" kinds are those that have been sanctioned by the state and that contain "correct" ideological messages. Improper kinds of music (or politically incorrect music) are those that have been construed by the state to contain "poisonous" influence, either from the discredited "feudal" society of the past or from the capitalistic, decadent West, and as such they must be censored or eliminated.

**Authorship and the Creation Process**

Before the twentieth century, the idea of an original composition identified with a particular person was foreign to the Chinese, and only a few traditional musical pieces had any attributed authorship. The sources for most traditional Chinese music were anonymous folk or popular materials transmitted orally or through written notation in manuscripts or printed music handbooks. In the traditional method of composition, these were rearranged in different ways, resulting in newly recomposed versions of the older models. The rearrangement process, however, is genre specific; that is to say, each genre has its own procedures and rules regarding rearrangements.

Some genres of music require a measure of improvisation during performance, such as adding improvised embellishments in Jiangnan sizhu. By adding improvised embellishments and varying the dynamics and tempi of the music according to established conventions during a performance and, most importantly, by extending or subtracting portions of the thematic materials in a spontaneous fashion, a performer is in fact acting as a composer as well. With the introduction of Western ideas to China in the twentieth century also came the Western musical repertory, compositional processes, and techniques and the idea of composership. Like their Western counterparts, modern Chinese composers regard themselves as individual creators of original music; the idea and emotion associated with a particular piece of music are regarded as the unique, individual expressions of the composer alone.

**LISTENING GUIDE**

**LISTEN: THE "INTERNATIONALE"**

In this recording, note the use of a standard Western military band accompaniment, with characteristic trumpet fanfares and martial-style drumming. Other than the fact that the lyrics are sung in Chinese, little sets this apart from similar recordings of this song by Russian, American labor, and French choirs.

- 0:00-0:09 Western orchestral introduction
- 0:10-0:31 Full choir enters to sing the verse
- 0:32-0:52 Bridge
Amateur and Professional Musicians

Before 1949 the status of a musician was determined by his education and his occupation. Professional musicians, who relied on music for their livelihood and usually had little formal education, had rather low social status, particularly those who performed entertainment music catering to members of the unlettered class. Unlike the professional musician, the amateur, who did not rely on making music for a livelihood but was accomplished in music, well educated, and cultivated, was regarded as the ideal gentleman. In Chinese history, many distinguished amateur musicians such as players of the qin, who usually came from the leisured class, were given high acclaim as musicians and mentioned in historical documents. Records of professional musicians, on the other hand, were few and far between until the twentieth century.

After 1949, the Communist government hoped to create a classless society, and the stigma on professional musicians was removed. For nationalistic and propagandistic purposes, many forms of traditional entertainment music and folk music that had been frowned on by orthodox Confucians in the past were elevated as China's national heritage, as was the status of their practitioners.

The government established many modern conservatories, whose curricula included Western art music as well as traditional Chinese music. Distinguished performers of traditional music, both amateur and professional, were hired as equals to teach in these conservatories.

NEW MUSICAL DIRECTIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1911, a Chinese revolution overthrew the Qing dynasty. In its place, a Republic was founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), a revolutionary with liberal ideas who attempted to model the Republic of China (1912-1949) on the constitutional government of the United States. But China was not yet ready for such an experiment, and Sun's effort was largely a failure. However, the establishment of the Republic of China represented a clean break with old values and practices that had existed for millennia, and in this process traditional music was neglected, and a new type of music was born.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, reformers such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) advocated the establishment of a new type of school that included
in its curriculum practical subjects such as arithmetic, geography, knowledge of the natural world, and classroom music. The reformers contended that traditional Chinese music (such as jingju, Jiangnan sizhu, and music for the qin and the pipa) were unsuitable for modern classroom music. Therefore, a new type of school song was adopted whose melodies, at first borrowed from school songs of the West and of Japan, were given didactic Chinese texts to inculcate a new sense of nationalism in young students. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, Chinese songwriters, many of whom had received some elementary music training in Japan, began themselves to write didactic school songs. The three most notable were Zeng Zhimin (1879-1929), Shen Xingong (1869-1947), and Li Shutong (1880-1942). The songs they wrote were simple and short, with a limited range and a square, marchlike rhythm, and they were predominantly syllabic, reflecting the influence of early Japanese school songs. The song texts were simple and direct messages concerned with patriotism, self-discipline, military readiness, and civic spiritedness. In the following decades, the derivatives of these didactic songs became the main musical diet of the majority of Chinese students.

As the new China faced challenges from the West and from Japan in the early twentieth century, protest songs began to be written. In 1914, at the beginning of the First World War (1914-1917), Japan attempted to seize control of China. Immediately, the Chinese people expressed their outrage in protests, demonstrations, and strikes. Songs denouncing Japanese aggression and the weak Chinese government were part of the protest movement and circulated widely in schools, universities, and nationwide workers' strikes and demonstrations. The musical style of these protest songs resembled that of the school songs, but what set them apart was their texts. Whereas the texts of school songs usually expounded the general principles of good citizenship, discipline, patriotism, and nationalism, those of the protest songs focused on the current political issues and used terse, sloganlike language. These protest songs were the predecessors of the later political songs known as Revolutionary Songs, or "Songs for the Masses," which were developed by the Chinese communists.

During the First World War, Japan formed an alliance with Great Britain against Germany, with the ulterior motive of seizing Germany's colony in China, the Qingdao (Tsingtao) peninsula, as its own colony. China entered World War I in 1917 to declare war on Germany in the hope of recovering Qingdao, then claimed by Japan. But at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, the victorious Western powers confirmed Japan's seizure of Qingdao. This act engendered a strong reaction against Japan and the Western allies among the Chinese, who used protest songs to stimulate nationalist sentiment. Then on May 4, 1919, this ferment culminated in a mass student demonstration at the National Peking University. This was the first time that the modern educated class began to make its mark on Chinese politics, and a precedent was set.
The political activities and the intellectual currents set in motion by these students developed into a broad national intellectual awakening known as the May Fourth Movement.

The May Fourth Movement affected the development of modern Chinese music profoundly. The hub of the Movement was Beida (National Peking University) under the administration of its remarkable and liberal chancellor, Cai Yuanpei (1867-1940), who fostered freedom of thought and education. Cai was well versed in the tenets of both Confucianism and Western philosophy, and he wanted to synthesize the Chinese classical tradition and the libertarianism of the modern European West that characterized the May Fourth Movement. When he became chancellor, Cai endeavored to create opportunities for the students to receive an aesthetic education that included music and art, which he maintained were essential subjects in modern education.

Cai felt that the reform of traditional Chinese music was necessary to bring it up to date, by borrowing elements from Western music. In 1916, Cai established an extracurricular music study group at Beida, staffed by both Chinese and Western teachers, which offered students instruction in Chinese and Western vocal and instrumental music; the teachers were also charged with the responsibility of finding ways to modernize traditional Chinese music. This music group eventually was reorganized and expanded to become China's first academic music department. Under the leadership of the composer Xiao Youmei (1884-1940), who was trained in Japan and Germany, this department offered instruction in music theory, composition, and the academic study of music, in addition to instrumental and vocal instruction. Xiao pioneered the reform of Chinese music by incorporating Western elements, notably harmony. In this way, he put into musical practice for the first time the self-strengthening slogan of 1898, "Chinese culture as the essence, and Western learning for practical use."

Another development initiated at Beida that had significant implications for the future development of the field of Chinese musicology was the Folk Song Campaign. Inspired by the Russian Narodniki Movement of the 1870s, it called for educated youth to go into the countryside to educate the peasants. Following this philosophy, a group of Beida students encountered folk song and folk art (which were considered unworthy of attention by most of the members of the elites of the old regime) and came to recognize their value. These efforts eventually produced the systematic collection and scholarly research of folk song, which laid the foundation for the future development of Chinese musicology.

The May Fourth Movement also affected the development of modern Chinese music by promoting the use of Chinese vernacular language as a written medium of communication in all fields, including scholarship, in place of the cumbersome literary Chinese that had been the language of literature and scholarship for millennia. Using the vernacular, the young writers
introduced a new popular literature that emulated Western forms and spread it through numerous periodicals and newspapers. Inspired by this development, some songwriters began to set new vernacular poems to music. One pioneer was Zhao Yuanren (Y. R. Chao, 1892-1982), a naturalized American who was an internationally known linguist and a composer. Combining elements of traditional Chinese music with Western ones such as harmony, Chao wrote songs with vernacular poetic texts and piano accompaniment. He is now considered the creator of the modern Chinese art song.

One of the most enduring aspects of the May Fourth Movement was the change in the ideology of China's educated class, brought about by the attack on Confucian values. Using newspapers and journals such as *The New Youth*, modern scholars condemned as tyranny the subordination of subject to ruler, wife to husband, son to father, and individual to family, all of which were regarded as remnants of a feudal society. Because the traditional Chinese musical theaters, such as jingju, promoted these feudal values, the merit of such theaters became a subject for debate. Some writers advocated the total elimination of traditional theater, including jingju; others advocated reform by emulating the theater of the West. Though these debates lasted only a few years (mainly from 1917 to 1919) and failed to produce any immediate, tangible reform, they did create a general disdain for traditional music and theater among the modern educated class. Moreover, a lingering sentiment for reform of traditional theater never went away, and when Jiang Qing (1913-1991), wife of Mao Zedong, became the cultural dictator during the Cultural Revolution, she drastically reformed jingju by incorporating elements of Western orchestral and harmonic practice into the music, of ballet into the choreography, and of scenic design into the stagecraft, as well as by replacing the traditional stories with revolutionary plots; this reformed musical drama came to be known in the West as "Model Opera."

At the time of the May Fourth Movement, authoritarian parties were proving successful in Europe, most notably in Russia, where revolution had established the triumph of the Communist Party. The success of the Russian revolution and its Marxist-Leninist political philosophy inspired some of the leading writers and thinkers of the May Fourth Movement, who eventually founded The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. It became the major opponent to the ruling Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist Party), and the two struggled for control of China for several decades.

By 1923 the impact of Marxism-Leninism on Chinese thought and on Chinese arts and music began to be felt as these came to be viewed as political tools for propaganda. The introduction of the "Internationale" to China in 1923, a song closely identified with the European labor movement of the 1890s and with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, came to be regarded as the signal of China's entrance into the world communist movement.
In the ensuing years, the increase of Japanese aggression in China stimulated many more protest songs against Japan, and Russian revolutionary songs began to be heard in leftist circles. The war of resistance against Japan from 1937 to 1945 during the Second World War stimulated a farther outpouring of songs with patriotic themes; composers of all political persuasions joined forces to produce songs in support of the war. Through being used in war films, many of these songs became very popular with general audiences, and after the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the production of thousands of "Songs for the Masses" became one of the important functions of the propaganda machine.

When I was a young student in the PRC in the early 1950s, the sole musical diet for my contemporaries and myself consisted of nothing but "Songs for the Masses." These songs, whose origins may be traced back to Western Protestant hymns and school songs, modern Japanese and Chinese school songs, Chinese folk songs, and Russian revolutionary songs, are short and simple, use the Western, diatonic scale, and have texts that are sloganlike ideological messages of communism and nationalism. We sang these songs in music classes and numerous political rallies and demonstrations, during the labor sessions in the countryside that every student had to participate in, and in our leisure time to amuse ourselves. One of the outstanding examples from the 1950s is "We Workers Have Strength". In the listening example the song is sung antiphonally between solo and chorus, but when sung in the classroom, the students sing the complete song in unison.

**LISTENING GUIDE**

**LISTEN: "WE WORKERS HAVE STRENGTH"**

Composed by Ma Ke

- **0:00-0:04** Western-style orchestral introduction
- **0:05-0:08** Solo vocal line
- **0:09-0:10** Choral response
- **0:11-0:15** Solo vocal line
- **0:16-0:17** Choral response
- **0:18-0:25** Chorus sung by all
- **0:26-0:36** Rapid back and forth between soloist and chorus
- **0:37-0:40** All together
- **0:41-0:47** More rapid interchanges between solo and chorus
- **0:48-0:50** Final refrain all together

(Track fades as two vocalists begin singing the next verse)