

CORO

Globalisation, ease of travel, and 24-hour media showing the Earth's remotest corners have proved that the world is indeed small. In some way they have also made us protective of our local heritage, drawing the culture of one's home country into sharper focus. This world music series shows the musical side of the phenomenon. The exciting set of discs, featuring some of the best musicians in the world, contains carefully chosen music in compilations possessing a natural musical flow. None of the musicians play electric instruments, giving the music a fabulous authentic feel, and many performances are recorded live, allowing the atmosphere to come sparkling through.

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## ACOUSTIC WORLD



Also on Acoustic World: COR16058

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COR16061

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## ACOUSTIC WORLD



CHINA

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This recording is compiled from the Nimbus world catalogue from recordings first released on Nimbus Records NI 5416, NI 5510, NI 5656 and NI 7043

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Design: Andrew Giles - agd@aegidius.org.uk



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1	<b>Nzer-tso</b> (Dance tune): Wang Chaoxin (leizi bili)	3.06
2	<b>Dengjue jiaohui</b> (Lanterns and moon competing in brilliance): Wu Man (pipa)	5.17
3	<b>Pingsha luoyan</b> (Wild geese descending on the sandbank): Lin Youren (qin)	8.24
4	<b>Kaitan Bo</b> (Cymbals to inaugurate the altar): Zhang Yuijie (gu), Zhang Shicai (nao), Pan Shizhong (bo), Li Jinwen (gezi), Wang Fengrui (dangzi)	3.13
5	<b>Xiyang xiaogu</b> (Flute and drum at sunset): Wu Man (pipa), Tien-Juo Wang (erhu/gaohu), Yang Yi (zheng), Liu Qi-Chao (dizi/xiao/suona)	9.33
6	<b>Wannian hua</b> (Eternal flowers): The Dayan Ancient Music Association	4.16
7	<b>Niao ton Un</b> (Birds in the forest): Wu Man and ensemble	3.20
8	<b>Improvisation for Michael Owen</b> : Lin Youren	5.49
9	<b>Yan guo nanlou</b> (Geese crossing over the southern mansion) – sung: Li Jinwen (voice - sung Gongche)	1.30
10	<b>Yan guo nanlou</b> (Geese crossing over the southern mansion) – played: Li Jinwen (guanzi), Wang Fengrui (sheng), Zhang Shicai (sheng), Zhang Shenglu (dizi), Pan Shizhong (yunluo), Zhang Yujie (gu)	8.01
11	<b>Shimian maifu</b> (Ambush on all sides): Wu Man and ensemble	9.13
12	<b>Shoujing jie</b> (Closing ode): The Dayan Ancient Music Association	4.01
	Total playing time	65.48

# C H I N A

The pace of change in China is running so fast it seems that in looking forwards it may be forgetting the past. But look closer and we realise that what is happening now is perhaps not so new: the Great Wall - the only man-made object visible from space - was not such a small building project. Consecutive party Chairmen have presumably also appreciated the philosophical opinion of Confucius (circa 551-479 BC), who considered music as a means of calming the passions and dispelling unrest and lust, rather than as a form of amusement.

Still, standing in downtown Shanghai and witnessing the obsessive nature with which the big cities have embraced modernity and secularisation is an awesome (in the true sense of the word) experience, leading one to think that huge swathes

of the country's heritage have been swept away like old houses in the path of a super-highway. But there is still respect for the past. After all, a musical culture that goes as far back as the Zhou Dynasty (1122 BC - 256 BC) is not so easily consigned to history. This disc presents classical repertoire led by four exponents of different living traditions: Lin Youren, Wu Man, Li Jinwen, and Xuan Ke.

In his playing and teaching of the qin zither, **Lin Youren** resists forced modernisation and gives us a glimpse into the past. The qin, which literally translates as 'ancient stringed instrument', is the modern name for a plucked seven-string instrument of the zither family. It has been played for centuries as the most revered of all instruments and has traditionally been favoured by the upper echelons of society and scholars as an instrument of great subtlety and refinement. During Imperial

times the study of the qin was part of gentlemanly self-cultivation, along with chess, calligraphy and painting. It is associated with Confucius, and is sometimes referred to by the Chinese as 'the instrument of the sages'.

The qin is a very quiet instrument, with a range of about four octaves. Sounds are produced by plucking open strings, by stopping strings, and by producing harmonics. Lin is famous for his unaffected meditative playing style which draws the listener into the sound picture he is painting. Much is made of the aesthetical aspect of playing the qin. Compositions characteristically have players moving their fingers up and down the silk strings even after a note has become inaudible. Described as 'playing without playing', 'making sound without sound', the sensory part of the player or watcher's mind compensates by filling in the sound, creating an atmosphere of meditation, concentration and connection.

Although the two musical styles are entirely independent, a number of people believe that qin performance sounds similar to blues music in one way or another. But in the best traditions of modern music cross-fertilisation, Lin gives us a gentle nod to English football fans in his *Improvisation for Michael Owen* - a piece inspired by the singing in a pub where he was himself watching England play Argentina in the 1998 World Cup.

**Wu Man**, born in Hangzhou but now resident in the United States, is arguably Chinese classical music's most famous artist. Trained in the Pudong school of pipa playing, she is now as active in contemporary music as in the traditional repertoire, pushing the boundaries of Chinese music as she explores and melds the music of other cultures to her own. She plays the pipa, a lute-like instrument with a history of more than two thousand years.

During the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC - 220 AD), instruments with long, straight necks and rounded bodies were played with a forward and backward plucking motion that sounded to some like 'pi' and 'pa'. All plucked instruments in China came to be called 'pipa', and it wasn't until the Tang dynasty (618 - 907 AD), with the introduction of a crooked-neck lute with a pear-shaped body that the individual instrument known as the pipa evolved. Today's instrument consists of twenty-six frets and six ledges arranged as stops. The four strings are tuned A,D,E, and A. The pipa's many left and right hand fingering techniques, rich tonal qualities and resonant timber give its music expressiveness and beauty that are lasting and endearing.

**Li Jinwen**, a former Buddhist monk, leads a group of musicians on this disc playing 'sheng-guan' – music for wind and percussion, which includes the flavoursome guanzi, a double reed

pipe similar to the oboe. Sitting on the coast near Beijing, Tianjin - the third most populous area in China after the capital and Shanghai - inherited much music from Imperial times. Buddhist music, which originated in ancient India, found its way into China some two thousand years ago, and after absorbing elements of traditional Chinese folk music, court music and other religious music, came to be recognised as a genre of its own. What is performed here by the Tianjin Buddhist Music Ensemble is an authentic mix of high-brow temple music combined with local folk music, a mix regularly performed today for funerals and on gods' birthdays throughout the south and west of Tianjin.

Those performances have not been taken for granted in recent generations. The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) ended the kind of music-making in which Li Jinwen took part as a monk.

Music founded upon the religious ceremonies of the temples and of ritual societies had, like many other activities, been precarious since 1949 - the year the Communist Party came to power. The Revolution banned such activities, but since 1978 more liberal policies have allowed traditional culture, including religious practice, to make a substantial revival.

The rebirth of Dongjing music is another strand making a strong come-back, and this disc features music from Lijiang, a city in the south west Yunnan Province. **Xuan Ke** and the Dayan Ancient Music Association study music derived from old ritual music festivals once played by Dongjing religious Associations. Lijiang differs from other ancient Chinese cities in history, language, culture and architecture (it is a Unesco World Heritage Site), owing to its traditional indigenous residents, the Naxi people. They speak a Tibeto-Burman language

and play some instruments not found elsewhere – the reedpipe bobo and the plucked lute suguda for example – and characteristically play the flute with a very wide vibrato.

Before 1949 there were many Dongjing associations - religious societies oriented around worship of the Taoist deity Wenchang. The term *Dongjing* is an abbreviation of the title of the Taoist scripture *Dadong Xianjing* or 'Immortals Book of the Great Grotto'. The associations, whose most exclusive groups were located in Dayan (as on this disc), Baisha, Shuhe and Lasha, performed highly regarded music during their ceremonies. Unlike most Naxi music, Dongjing uses Chinese titles, Chinese instruments, and gongche notation - which uses Chinese characters to represent musical notes. Moving away from the local dialect shows the elite status of the associations within the Naxi population.

# TRACK DETAILS

## 1 Nzer-tso (dance tune)

Wang Chaoxin (leizi bili)

This Naxi melody, Guqi, has had many different lyrics attached to it. Here it is in its pure form played on a vertical flute.

## 2 Dengjue jiaohui (Lanterns and moon competing in brilliance)

Wu Man (pipa)

A folk-based piece in the pipa luongu style (pipa with gongs and drums). In this piece lanterns are lit to celebrate the Chinese New Year, and the music describes their colours vying for supremacy with the brightness of the moon.

## 3 Pingsha luoyan (Wild geese descending on the sandbank)

Lin Youren (qin)

A sad piece learnt by Lin from his teacher, based on the 1868 score *Jiao'an qinpu*.

## 4 Kaitan Bo (Cymbals to Inaugurate the Altar)

Zhang Yuije (gu), Zhang Shicai (nao), Pan Shizhong (bo),  
Li Jinwen (gezi), Wang Fengrui (dangzi)

This piece inaugurates the altar at the start of a ritual. Once completed the gods are then welcomed.

## 5 Xiyang xiaogu (Flute and drum at sunset)

Wu Man (pipa), Tien-Juo Wang (erhu/gaohu),  
Yang Yi (zheng), Liu Qi-Chao (dizi/xiao/suona)

A traditional piece most often heard in a version for bigger ensemble called *Chunjiang huayue ye* (Spring river flowery moon night). Dating from 1895, this version has 9 sections:

The sound of bell and drum from a distant temple along the river  
Moon on the eastern mountain  
Breeze over the quiet water  
Shadows of flowers  
Clouds and water far away become as one  
Fisherman's song in the evening  
Waves lapping at the shore  
The returning boat  
Coda

## 6 Wannian hua (Eternal flowers)

The Dayan Ancient Music Association

This piece has an alternative name, *Wannian huan* (Eternal Joy), but is here connected with the Dongjing ritual ceremony of Ten Offerings in which flowers are presented at the altar. Each offering was accompanied by its own music.

7] **Niao ton Un** (Birds in the forest)

**Wu Man and ensemble**

This Cantonese piece was composed in 1930 by Yi Jianquan after a trip to Hangzhou. Like so much music for the pipa this is programmatic, depicting scenes from nature, of which the most obvious is birdsong.

8] **Improvisation for Michael Owen**

**Lin Youren**

Lin's meditative version of English football fans singing after Michael Owen's most famous goal.

9] **Yan guo nanlou** (Geese crossing over the southern mansion) - sung

**Li Jinwen (voice - sung Gongche)**

A wonderfully evocative introduction to the next track.

10] **Yan guo nanlou** (Geese crossing over the southern mansion) - played

**Li Jinwen (guanzi), Wang Fengrui (sheng), Zhang Shicai (sheng),  
Zhang Shenglu (dizi), Pan Shizhong (yunluo), Zhang Yujie (gu)**

Performed in the morning of a ritual, the musical keys are deliberately mixed.

11] **Shimian maifu** (Ambush on all sides)

**Wu Man and ensemble**

Musical history is dotted with numerous examples of depictions of battles. This traditional piece, performed from a 1929 score, recounts the battle between the Chu and Han armies in 202 BC. The sections are entitled:

Setting up camp

Beating drum

Wielding horns

Firing cannon

Fanfare

Calling the roster

Preparing for battle

Laying ambush

Going into battle

The climax of battle

Screams

Surrounded

Chasing off the enemy

12] **Shoujing jie** (Closing ode)

**The Dayan Ancient Music Association**

This piece closed Dongjing association meetings before the arrival of the Communist government in 1949, and is still sung to close the secular meetings. Separated by percussion interludes the text reads:

'The great Tao is close, it resides in one's person.

The myriad teachings are vacuous, while nature is not.

Spirit nature is not vacuous, the original *qi* pours in.

The *qi* returns to the original ocean and longevity is boundless.'