

ECHOES OF ANCESTRAL VOICES

Traditional Music of Vietnam



DANG KIM HIEN and LE TUAN HUNG

- 1** **Flowing Water** 8'29" — South Vietnamese Classical Chamber Music
- 2-3** **North Vietnamese Lullabies** 1'49" & 1'56"
- 4-5** **Central Vietnamese Lullabies** 1'47" & 2'04"
- 6-7** **South Vietnamese Lullabies** 1'50" & 1'41"
- 8** **River Chant** 10'37" — Central Vietnamese Folk Chant
- 9** **On Hearing the Night Drum, Missing My Husband** 4'28" — South Vietnamese Classical Chamber Music
- 10** **Nostalgia** 7'17" — Music of South Vietnamese Music Drama
- 11** **Kieu at the Ngung Bich Tower** 8'29" — Chanted poetry
- 12** **Four Grand Landscapes** 5'46" — Classical Chamber Music of Hue
- 13** **Earth Drum Song** 8'27" — North Vietnamese Folksong



Echoes of Ancestral Voices presents a collection of pieces of Vietnamese traditional music. Authentic versions of pieces from various classical and folk traditions are carefully realised with musical and linguistic aspects relevant to each tradition. The beauty of the music is also enhanced by the performers' mastery of performance practice of various Vietnamese musical genres and their personal touch in performances.

1 Flowing Water (Long version)

Nhac Tai Tu [South Vietnamese Classical Chamber music]

Le Tuan Hung: dan tranh [Vietnamese zither]

Dang Kim Hien: dan nguyet [moon lute] and song lang [foot clapper]

This is one of the six principal pieces in Bac mode in the repertory of *Nhac Tai Tu*. Music in this mode expresses peace and happiness. The performance starts with an improvised introduction in free metre. The piece itself is only a melodic framework and performers have to elaborate this framework in their performance.

2 - 3 North Vietnamese Lullabies

Sleep well little baby,

Your mother has not returned from the ricefield

Sleep well little baby

Your mother has to work hard, days and nights.

Father's boon is as large as sky-reaching mountains

Mother's love is as vast as the Eastern Sea
How immense your parents' love and care
Always remember that, my little one

4 - 5 Central Vietnamese Lullabies

Dear little one, sleep and sleep well,
Who would bear the burdens of our nation
while I am soothing you?
Dear little one, sleep and sleep well,
Then, mummy could share some of the nation's burdens.

Listen to the ducks' calls in the evenings,
Missing mother, my heart is in deep pain,
Evening after evening, I stand in the backyard,
Looking homewards, a deep pain felt in my heart

6 - 7 South Vietnamese Lullabies

The stable wooden bridge is reinforced
with nails
The shaky bamboo bridge is rough and
hard to pass
No matter how hard, let mummy take your
hand
Your way: to the school, mummy's way:
to the challenges of life

The birds of banyan tree always sit on the
banyan
Why did I marry a person living so far
away?

When my parents become older and
weaker

Who will take care of them?

8 River Chant

Central Vietnamese Folk Chant

Dang Kim Hien: Voice, dan nguyet [moon lute]

Evening after evening,
Opposite the Royal Tower of Literature,
A lonely person sits by the river,
Fishing, grieving, or just longing for
someone?

From a passing sampan,
Echoes of a river chant touches the painful
heart of the nation

On the immense water of the lagoon
On the deep deep blue river
Far far away from home
My heart is full of affection
for the rivers, mountains and for you

9 On Hearing the Night Drum, Missing My Husband

Nhac Tai Tu [South Vietnamese Classical Chamber Music]

Music by Cao Van Lau; Monochord realisation: Dang Kim Hien

Dang Kim Hien: dan bau [monochord]

Mr. Cao Van Lau composed this piece in c.1920 in dedication to the painful experience of Vietnamese women separated from their loved ones. The music is in Nam mode, expressing sadness.

10 Nostalgia

(phrases 1,2 and 3 in 32-bar format)

Nhac Cai Luong [Music of the South Vietnamese Music Drama]

Dan tranh realisation by Dang Kim Hien

Dang Kim Hien: dan tranh [Vietnamese zither] and song lang [foot clap]

Since 1927, the piece On Hearing the Night Drum, Missing My Husband (track 9) has been extended by various anonymous musicians. The extended version is designated as Vong Co [Nostalgia]. The two-bar phrases of the original composition has been expanded to become four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two and sixty-four-bar phrases. The longer phrases allow musicians to introduce more complicating musical materials to demonstrate their virtuosity in the process of elaboration of and improvisation on the melodic framework of the piece.

11 Kieu at the Ngung Bich Tower

Chanted poetry

Text: Excerpt from the verse narrative

Doan Truong Tan Thanh [Sorrowful Cries]

by Nguyen Du (1765-1813)

Dang Kim Hien: Voice, dan nguyet [moon lute]

Le Tuan Hung: dan tranh [zither]

At the Ngung Bich Tower, she watched the Spring days passed

Alone, with the hills far off and the moon near by

On the horizon: the golden sand dunes and the ochre dust of trails

Days and nights, nature seemed to share her feelings.

Thinking of him, and the promises under the moon

Day after day, would he still long for her in the mist?

Alone, facing the sky and the sea

Would her love fade with time?

Grieving for her awaiting parents

Who would take care of them?

Many seasons had passed

The tree in the front yard would have grown.

Watching the sea at dusk in sadness

Whose boat was out there, with fluttering sails?

Watching the wavy water in sadness

Where would it take the scattered flowers to?

Watching the wilted grass in sadness

Where clouds and earth joined: only a bluish haze

Watching the wind whip up the cove in sadness

Only the sound of the roaring waves was with her

12 Four Grand Landscapes

Nhac Hue [Classical Chamber Music of Hue]

Classical lyric: Tieng Huong Binh [Song of the Huong River and Ngu Binh Mountain]

Dang Kim Hien: Voice, dan nguyet [moon lute] and phach [wooden clappers]

Le Tuan Hung: dan tranh [zither]

Song of the river and mountain, a spectacle like a landscape painting. Viewing the old imperial city... in front of the Phoenix Tower, blue mountains and circling waterways. A landscape of paradise, a jade city in imagination, an urban touch enlivened with elegant people.

Autumn moon sparkling on the river, make one feels like dreaming. A birdcall pierces the mist, bring to mind the vicissitude of history. Whoever out there, on the sampan, singing and chanting sentimental songs, till dawn.

Only the sounds of the oar remain on the river of dream and emotion. Who is the person with vision and dedication for the nation? A heartfelt question for time.

13 Earth Drum Song

North Vietnamese Folksong

Dang Kim Hien: Voice, trong de [small drum]

Le Tuan Hung: Voice, trong com [rice drum]

Earth Drum Song is an antiphonal song performed by village boys and girls on moonlit nights. The performers accompanied themselves by an earth drum. An earth drum consists of a hole in the ground covered with a plate, a pole erected on the plate and a string stretched

over the pole to hold it down. The performers beat the string to create rhythmic patterns to accompany their singing. In this recording, the accompanying rhythm is reproduced on a small drum and a rice drum. The lyrics of the Earth Drum Song are poetic riddles, sung to a relatively fixed melody. The lyrics were often created spontaneously during performance to demonstrate the performers' sense of wit and humour. On many occasions, the singing session led to the exchange of romantic songs between boys and girls

The sky is full of coloured clouds: Blue, white, yellow ...
Am I dreaming? I dream that I could marry you. If my dream comes true, I shall build a half-moon-shaped pond in my garden.
Just for you, to wash your feet...

Dang Kim Hien is a composer and virtuoso performer in both traditional and contemporary music of Vietnam. She holds a National Gold Medal for Excellence in Vietnamese Zither Performance and a National Award for Excellence in Traditional Chants. In addition to her career as an active composer-performer, she taught at the



Department of Traditional Music of the Conservatory of Music in Saigon for 14 years.

Le Tuan Hung is a composer, performer and author, specialising in Vietnamese music and experimental music of contemporary Australia. He has performed

in Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and Oceania. His compositions and performances have been recorded on Move Records, ABC Music, and NMA Records. He is also the author of various publications on Vietnamese performing arts, and is regarded as an authority in Vietnamese musicology. He holds academic qualifications in various disciplines, including a PhD in Musicology from Monash University.

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