

An Introduction to Vietnamese Music

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Geographically, Vietnam occupies the eastern coast of the Indochines péninsule, extending from China South to the Gulf of Siam, and is a part of Southeast Asia . Culturally, artistically and , above all, musically, Vietnam is a part of the Sino-Japanese family grouping China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Vietnam . The music of the Far Eastern world shares many common characteristics : script (Chinese characters), musical terminology (the same theory for the determination of twelve basic tones and the names of musical instruments), musical instruments (most of them of Chinese origin), musical genres (court music, music for entrecroisement), village folk music, anhemitonic pentatonic scale for ritual music, theatre music and ceremonial music .

Ten centuries of chinese rule (from 111 B.C. to A.D. 939) have profuondly influenced the life, culture and music of the Vietnamese people . Musical instruments, such as the 16 stringed zither, the 4 stringed pear shaped lute, 3 stringed lute, 2 stringed fiddle, vertical and transverse flutes, the oboe, large and sall drums, cymbal, stone chime, bell chime, undoubtedly originated from China . Names of musical instruments are written in Chinese characters but their pronunciation differs according to whether they are read by a Chinese or Vietnamese (16 stringed zither ZHENG in Chinese, TRANH in Vietnamese, pear chaped lute PIPA in Chinese, TY BA in Vietnamese, etc....)

During the Lê Dynasty (1428-1788) the first theory of Vietnamese music was copied from the Chinese (the theory of five degrees, of seven tones and twelve LYU or basic tones, and the eight categories of court music : music of the esplanade of heaven, temple music, music of the five sacrifices, musi for helping the sun and the moon in the event of the eclipse, music for formal audiences, music for ordinary audiences, banguet music and palace music . Musical notation (ho, xu, xang , xê, công , liu) was still written in Chinese until the eve of the World War 1 (1914-1918)

Owing to its geographical position, at the crossroads of different peoples and civilizations, Vietnam has also come into contact with the Champa Kingdom of Indian civilization . Indian influences can be found in the use of the improvized prelude RA in the South , or DAO (read ZAO) in the North, preceding the performance of a set musical coposition, in the use the TRONG COM, a long two membrane drum covered with a rice paste in the centre of the drum head, similar to the MRIDANGAM of South India, and in the use of onomatopeia for drum playing (toong, ta-roong, tang, ta-rang, cac, ta-rac, trac, rup, sâm, tich, ru) , as in the BOL end THEKA systems of Indian music .

Chinese and Indiean infulences have not, however, destroyed the creative instincts of the Vietnamese people . In fact, the national entity is reflected in the creation of three purely Vientamese musical instruments :

1. The DAN DAY or DOI CAM or VO DE CAM, the songstresses' 3 stringed lute, which incorporates the peculiarities of the 2 stringed moon shaped lute DAN KIM or DAN NGUYET, of the 4 stringed pear shaped lute DAN TY BA, and of the 3 stringed lute DAN TAM
2. The SINH TIEN, or coin clappers, bearng all the caracteristîcs of clappers, sistrum and scrapers .

3. The monochord DAN DOC HUYEN or DAN BAU, differing from other Asian monochords (e.g. the Camgodian SADEV, the Indian GOPIYANTRA and EKTARA, the Chinese I HSIEN QIN, and the Japanese ICHIGENKIN), in the exclusive combination of the use of a unique string and the production of harmonics .

Vietnam is a multinational country, together with its population of 68 millions of Vietnamese of Mongoloid race. There are also 15 millions of aborigenes grouping some 53 ethnic minorities . The composition of ethnic minorities is as followed : the Muong , Tho, Chut (of Viet-Muong language), the Tay, Nung, Thai, Cao Lan , San Chi, Lao, Puna (of Tay-Thai language), the Hmong , Dao, Pathen, Tông (of Hmong-Dao language), the Lolo, La Hu, Cong, Phu La, Si La (of Tibeto-Burman language), the Bahnar, Kmer, Sedang, Mnong, Maa, Sre, Katu, Khmu, Hre (of Mon-Khmer language), the Jarai, Ede, Cham, churu, Rhade (of Austronesian language), the Co Lao, La Chi, Pu Peo, La ha (of various languages of the Austroasiatic family), etc....

The history of Vietnamese music can be divided into four periods, from the foundation of the first Vietnamese Dinh Dynasty (968-980)

1. The first period (10th – 15th centuries) characterized by the conjugated influence of Chinese and Indian music
2. The second period (15th – 18th centuries) , characterized by the predominance of Chinese influence .
3. The third period (19th century to the eve of World War 2) characterized by the originality and entity of Vietnamese traditional music, and by the introduction of superficial influence of Western music.
4. The fourth period (from 1945 – onwards) characterized by the decline of and new attempts to restore traditional music, and by the development of a new European style music .

The Vietnamese musical language is characterized by the use of musical scales such as :

- the ditonic scale (e.g. the HAT DUM, as in the alternating voices song of the Hai Duong province in North Vietnam)
- the tritonic scale (e.g. as in children's game-songs « TUM NUM TUM NIU », « OANH TU TI », folksongs « THUYEN PHENH », « DO DUA » of the Hai Duong province , « HAT DAM, » « VI DO DUA » of the Nghe Tinh province, « HAT THAI » charade song of Central Vietnam, of the beginning of the classical piece « NAM XUAN »
- the tetratonic scale (e.g. « HAT DANG QUAT » of the Thanh Hoa province in North Vietnam, « HO DO HAY, « LY HOA THOM », « LY LACH » of the Quang Nam province in Central Vietnam, the lullaby « RU EM » and boatwoman's song « HO MAI DAY » of Central Vietnam .
- the pentatonic scale comprising five types :

1. C – D – E – G – A – C (folksongs)
2. C - D – F – G – A – C (Bac modal system music)
3. C – Eb- F – G – Bb- C (Nam modal system music)
4. C – D – F – G – Bb- C (Ngu Cung Dao piece)
5. C – E – F – G – A – C (Vong Co piece)

Vietnamese music is composed of many musical genres : court music, ceremonial music, religious music, village music, new Western style music , and music of the proto-Indochinese music .

COURT MUSIC

During the first years of the Le Dynasty (1428-1788), Luong Dang , a high Court dignitary , was asked to establish a new theory of Court music which took its form from Ming Chinese music . Eight categories were presented to King Le Thai Ton .

1. GIAO NHAC : music of the « esplanade of Heaven », performed during the sacrifice for Heaven and Earth , and during the triennial ceremony celebrated by the Vietnamese emperors .
2. MIEU NHAC : Confucius temple music performed at the Confucius temple and during the anniversary commemoration of the death of Vietnamese sovereigns .
- 3 .NGU TU NHAC : music of the Five Sacrifices
- 4 .CUU NHUT NGUYET GIAO TRUNG NHAC : music for helping the sun and the moon in the event of the eclipse .
- 5 .DAI TRIEU NHAC : music for formal audiences
- 6 .THUONG TRIEU NHAC : music for ordinary audiences
- 7 .DAI YEN CUU TAU NHAC : music for large banquets .
- 8 .CUNG TRUNG CHI NHAC : palace music

Apart from music performed for the Emperor, there are two large instrumental ensembles (DUONG THUONG CHI NHAC – music of the upper hall ; DUONG HA CHI NHAC – music of the lower hall). Court dances consist of military dance (VO VU), civilian dance (VAN VU), flower branches dance (HOA DANG VU), phoenix dance (PHUNG VU), horse dance (MA VU), four fabulous animals dance (TU LINH VU), and the dance of the 8 barbarians presenting their gifts (BAT MAN TAN CONG VU) .

CEREMONIAL AND RELIGIOUS MUSIC

Ceremonial music and religious music are to-day heard less and less . Funerals are held according to the Confucian, buddhist, Caodaist or Christian rituals . In some parts of the country one can still witness the celebration of the worship of ancestors or local deities . The Buddhist or Caodaist prayers, the medium or medicine men or women incantations (CHAU VAN, HAU VAN, ROI BONG) are still to be heard in numberless pagodas and temples in Vietnam . Christian music is inspired from the Western Catholic liturgy, while new Buddhist music in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh city) is written by young composers who take their inspiration from Christian hymns .

MUSIC FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Music for entertainment purposes is performed by a small instrumental ensemble for a small audience :

1. In the North, the HAT A DAO (songstress' song) mostly vocal but accompanied by three musical instruments : a 3 stringed lute DAN DAY, wooden clappers PHACH, and a small drum TRONG CHAU reserved for the listener-connoisseur
2. In Central Vietnam, the CA HUE (Hue Music) of aristocratic origins . this music is often only instrumental (the orchestra being composed of stringed instruments, including zither, lutes, fiddle and transverse flute). As for the songs, the voice is always accompanied by an instrumental ensemble .
3. In the South, it is the DAN TAI TU (the so called « music of the amateurs ») coming from the Hue and Quang traditions. This music is the origin of the music of the renovated theater HAT CAI LUONG .

THEATER

Theater in Vietnam comprises the traditional theater of Chinese origin (HAT TUONG, HAT BOI), folk theater (HAT CHEO in the North), and renovated theater (HAT CAI LUONG). A new westernized theater (KICH NOI) was born during the 30's. The water puppet theater (MUA ROI NUOC) is created by the Vietnamese people.

FOLK MUSIC

Folk music is composed by the people for the people without any artistic goals, illustrating the life of an individual from the cradle to the grave. It is essentially vocal music (DAN CA, literally DAN : people ; CA : songs).

Lullabies (HAT RU in the North, RU CON in the Center, and HAT DUA EM in the South), children's game songs (THIEN DANG DIA NGUC, tag games OANH TU TI – one two three, etc...) work songs associated with work in the field (irrigation HO DAP NUOC, HO TAT NUOC, rice grinding HO XAY LUA, lime crushing HO GIA VOI. Boatman songs can be heard on the rivers (HO CHEO GHE, HO CHEO THUYEN, HO MAI NHI, HO MAI DAY, HO MAI XAP, HO KHOAN, HO SONG MA).

Love songs are countless in Vietnam. In the North, the birthplace of festival songs (TRONG QUAN, QUAN HO, CO LA, HAT DUM, HAT PHUONG VAI, HAT GIAM, HAT GHEO, HAT XOAN). Songs are used for singing contests between girls and boys. In Central Vietnam, the HO or calls, are associated with many village activities and the LY, very numerous, include mostly love songs (LY THUONG NHAU, LY HOAI NAM, LY MONG CHONG, LY NAM CANH, LY CHIA TAY, LY HANH VAN, etc...). In the South, the most famous HO are the A LI HO LO, HO DONG THAP, HO BA LY, HO LO TO, HO CAY. The LY are : LY GIAO DUYEN, LY VONG PHU, LY CHIM QUYEN, LY CHUON CHUON, LY CAY CHANH, LY BO BIA, LY CON KHI DOT, LY CON SAO, LY NGUA O, LY DIA BANH BOQ, etc... HAT GIAM VE (stories told in flowery terms), HAT VE, NOI VE, HAT XAM (peddler's songs) are other types of Vietnamese folk songs.

MODERN MUSIC

Modern music based on Western musical styles was introduced to Vietnam around the 1930s. On the eve of World War 2, the Youth movement gave origin to a new music corresponding to youth's aspirations for struggle (songs of struggle NHAC CHIEN DAU) for love (love songs NHAC TINH CAM). During the last 60 years pop music has rapidly developed and now represents nearly 80% of the music heard in Vietnam. Songs associated with love, struggle, war, revolution, natural beauty, etc... are a convincing means of expression for awakening or subduing the political conscience of the people.

The most famous composers in Vietnam are Luu Huu Phuoc (died in 1989), Pham Duy (moved to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975), Trinh Cong Son (died in 2001) Le Thuong (died in 1999). Classical music in the Western idiom was late in developing in Vietnam : works for piano have been composed by Mrs. Louise Nguyen Van Ty and the late Vo Duc Thu. Symphonic works have been and are always written in Vietnam by Do Nhuan (deceased) Nguyen Xuan Khoat (deceased), Nghiem Phu Phi (in the United States). In France, some composers like Nguyen Van Tuong (deceased in 1998), Truong Tang (deceased in 1989), Ton That Tiet, Nguyen Thien Dao and Tran Quang Hai have written many compositions in electro-acoustical, contemporary or avant gardist style. Some renowned young composers such as Phan Quang Phuc (USA), Vu Nhat Tan (Vietnam), Hoang Ngoc

Tuan (Australia), Lê Tuấn Hưng (Australia) have had their works performed in Western countries .

A great number of harmonized folksongs part singing have attracted a certain category of the Vietnamese population . This Westernized music, now in expansion, cannot, however, be judged at this time .

TRIBAL MUSIC

Tribal or Ethnic Minorities, living in the mountainous sections of the country, in an area equal to two thirds of the entire territory of Vietnam, and especially in the autonomous zone of Viet Bac, the Northwest mountains or Vietnamese Cordillere and the High Plateaus of Central Vietnam, have a music which is completely different from that of the Vietnamese of Mongolian origin . this music has a wealth of dances, songs and musical instruments (Jew's harps in metal and bamboo – RODING, TOUNG, GOC ; mouth organ with divergent tubes – MBOAT, KOMBOAT, ROKEL ; xylophone – TRUNG, KLENG KLANG ; monochord fiddle – KONI ; gongs – CING ; gong ensemble ; hydraulic chime – TANG KOA ; lithophone of the Mnong Gar from the village of Ndut Lieng Krak, etc...) This music has many common characteristics with the music of other tribal peoples in Southeast Asia .

Several thousand years of existence explains the great diversity of musical genres and extreme variety of musical instruments to be found in Vietnamese music .

Program of the concert

1. Folksong from North Vietnam : CO LA (The Egret is Hovering) by Bach Yên and Trần Quang Hai (with 2 stringed fiddle đàn co)
2. Solo of 2 stringed fiddle đàn co by Trần Quang Hai
3. Presentation of different types of Jew's harp đàn môi in Asia by Trần Quang Hai
4. Lullaby from North Vietnam Hat Ru by Bach Yên
5. Lullaby from South Vietnam Au O by Bach Yên
6. Lullaby from Central Vietnam Ru Em by Bach Yên
7. Solo of spoons by Trần Quang Hai
8. Solo of 16 stringed zither đàn tranh by Trần Quang Hai
9. Folksong from Central Vietnam : LY CON SAO (The Straling Song) by Bach Yên and Trần Quang Hai (16 stringed zither đàn tranh)
10. Demonstration of different styles of sung poetry (ngâm thơ) by Bach Yên
11. Demonstration of different vocal styles in Asia (Mongolia, Japan, China, Vietnam) by Trần Quang Hai
12. Worksong from Central Vietnam : HO HUI (Song for breaking stones) by Bach Yên and Trần Quang Hai
13. Solo of coin clappers sinh tiền by Trần Quang Hai
14. Folksong from North Vietnam : HAI HOA (Picking flowers) by Bach Yên and Trần Quang Hai

DESCRIPTION OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

DAN TRANH

The DAN TRANH (dan : instrument ; tranh : to dispute) is a 16 stringed zither with movable bridges (a zither employed in its generic meaning) . According to ancient legend, the Vietnamese zither originally had 32 strings . A zither master taught the art of playing this instrument to his two young daughters . One day, these two young women argued about who was to play the only musical instrument in the house . The master , very angry, broke the instrument in two and made two identical zithers to please each of his daughters . This is why the instrument is called TRANH, which means « to dispute » .

The Vietnamese zither, the smallest of the Far Eastern zithers (the Japanese KOTO, 180cm ; the Korean KAYAKEUM, 160cm ; the Chinese ZHENG, 145cm ; the Mongolian JETAKH , 145cm) measures 90 cm to 110 cm in length and is usually 20 cm wide on the larger side and 13cm on the smaller side . The sound box (DAN TRANH) has the form of a half cone. The base of the instrument has three holes pierced in it : the first hole, sem-circular, enables the musician to attach the strings with small pieces of paper ; the second hole, rectangular, is also the sound hole, and it also enables the musician to hold the instrument with one of his hands while walking ; the third one, which is small and round, permits the musician to hang the instrument on the wall when he has finished playing . The 16 strings are of steel (in twisted silk until the end of the 17th century, and in brass until the beginning of the 20th century), and are divided into two sections by a series of 16 NHAN (wild geese) or movable bridges of wood or plastic . These are stretched along a wooden soundboard (NGO DONG) , once made of oleococca wood, which is now very rare . One end of the strings is wound around the 16 TRUC, wooden or plastic pegs, while the other end of the strings passes through the 16 small holes near the tail board, where they are attached with small pieces of paper .

Considerable musical research is still pursued in Vietnam. In the North many instruments of the zither family, probably inspired by Chinese zithers of larger size, of almost two meters in length and with an impressive number of strings, are being constructed and used experimentally in neo-traditional orchestras . Young zither players electrify their DAN TRANH during concerts in large halls or in the open air . In South Vietnam , especially in Hô Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Professor Nguyen Vinh Bao, one of the finest if not the best DAN TRANH player in Vietnam, has spent many years of research (in instrument making and acoustics) to improve the shape and sonority of the instrument. Prof. Nguyen Vinh Bao has made 17, 19 and 21 stringed zithers with a sound board of Japanese wood (kiri paulownia) instead of Vietnamese wood (NGO DONG) . This research has been conducted with excellent results ; as far as playing techniques are concerned, the musician uses plectrums of tortois shell, metal or plastic on the thumb and forefinger of his right hand and forefinger of his right hand, according to South Vietnamese tradition . He might also use his own nails to pluck the strings near the tailboard . Right hand technique consists of single notes, arpeggios, double stops, harmonics. Left hand technique comprises NHAN VUOT (pressing and sliding) , NHAN RUNG (pressing and vibrating) , NHAN NHAY (holding and releasing), and NHAN MO (pressing and plucking) . The left hand , with only the forefinger, middle finger and ring finger, is used to press more or less heavily on the section of the strings between the pegs and the bridges to alter the tension and consequently, the pitch of the played notes. The left hand also executes an extremely delicate and elaborate form of embellishments which is a unique characteristic of Vietnamese traditional music .

There exist many ways of tuning the Vietnamese zither according to the various modal systems.

The DAN TRANH, a favorite instrument of young Vietnamese girls in both ancient and modern societies, can be played as a solo instrument, in duet, trio, or instrumental ensembles

of the renovated theater HAT CAI LUONG , and folkloric groups, are more recently, in pop songs, sung poetry, and in several compositions written in the contemporary European idiom .

DAN CO

The 2 stringed fiddle is called DAN CO (DAN : instrument ; CO : to bow) in South Vietnam and DAN NHI (DAN : instrument ; NHI : two) in Central and North Vietnam . Generally, constructed of a cylindrical or hexagonal sound box, one side is covered with snake skin . It has two strings made of twisted silk, metal or nylon which are stretched along the entire length of the neck and wound around two pegs. A piece of string called KHUYET DON is used as a capodastro and divides the two strings in the middle section . This cord can be adjusted to tune the fiddle to the pitch of the singer's voice . The little bamboo bridge also serves as a mute when the player puts his or her knee against it to slightly muffle the strings. The horsehair of the bamboo bow is caught between the two strings . A piece of resin called TONG CHI or THONG DON is fixed to the side of the sound box, so that the horsehair is continually coated as the bow moves forward and backward .

The two strings are tuned in fifths . The tuning bears different names according to whether the little string corresponds to such and such degree of the scale . The 2 stringed fiddle has four tunings :

1. DAY THUAN (DAY : string ; THUAN : in good terms) is tuned at F3 – C4 if the fiddle has a coconut sound box (DAN GAO)
2. DAY NGHICH (DAY : string ; NGHICH : contrary) is tuned at G3 – D4 if it has a cylindrical sound box (DAN CO)
3. DAY NGUYET DIEU (DAY : string ; NGUYET : moon ; DIEU : red) is tuned at C3 – G3 if it has a bamboo sound box (DAN GAO TRE)
4. DAY CHAN (DAY : string ; CHAN : to help) is tuned at D3-A3 if it has a small cylindrical sound box (DAN CO CHI)

To play this instrument, the musician holds the neck in the left hand, with the left thumb against the cord KHUYET DON, while the other fingers play on the two strings . The right hand holds the bow, palm upwards. Double string technique is unknown in Vietnam. Other techniques, like glissandi (VUOT), trills (DO HOT) and tremolos (RUNG CUNG) are employed , however .

The musician can sit on the floor or on a sofa, to hold the instrument with his bare feet. It can also be placed on the musician's thigh or pressed against the left hip during a funeral procession .

The fiddle is the favorite instrument of strolling players, and is also played in court orchestras and traditional classical or folk ensembles . In more recent times, your fiddlers have used a new fingering technique learned in China. Here the strings are no longer pressed with the finger joints but with the ends of the fingers in the manner of European violin playing. With this new technique, several octaves can be obtained on the two strings .

SINH TIEN

The SINH TIEN (the common name for the QUAN TIEN PHACH, coin clappers) is a very original percussion instrument, composed of three wooden pieces of equal length . The first wooden piece has two bamboo sticks inside of them has sapeks or coins. The second one has one bamboo stick with some coins and the inner surface serrated. The third piece also has a

serrated edge . These coin clappers, as a result of a special playing technique, produce the sonority of clappers, scrapers and sistrum . To play this instrument , the musician hold two wooden pieces with bamboo sticks in the palm of one hand, one over the other, as in the lever system. The other hand holds the third wooden piece in the manner of holding a violin bow in order to scrape the two other pieces, which in the meantime are being shaken or clapped to make the coins jump inside of the sticks .

A musical instrument of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) is longer used for court music. It formed a part of the folk orchestra which accompanied the New Year celebration (HAT SAC BUA of the Nghe Tinh province of North Vietnam). The SINH TIEN coin clappers are nowadays played to accompany folk dances, folk songs and rhythmic improvisations recreated by Tran Quang Hai .

MUONG

The MUONG (sponns) has been a very popular instrument in South Vietnam for the last 60 years . The « spoonist » holds the handles of two stainless steel bent unequally spoons in the palm of one hand with the forefinger squeezed between the two handles which act as a lever and enable the two concave surfaces of the spoons to be separated by a distance of about 2 millimeters. Several spoon techniques exist : hitting the knee, scraping 2, 3, 4, 5 fingers of the left hand, running the spoons along the left arm, along the bony parts of the hand, the two knees, against the chin and on the mouth, in the latter case, the mouth serving as a resonator to multiply the melodic lines obtained by the variation of the mouth cavity .

In Vietnam, children create rhythms with kitchen spoons . During the war, soldiers accompanied revolutionary songs with two spoons. Tran Quang Hai has also contributed considerably to the improvement of spoon playing . In the past 40 years, he has invented new playing techniques to this instrument by introducing the spoons to traditional Vietnamese music, folk music, pop music, electro-acoustical music . Thanks to him, spoons can now be performed as a solo instrument .

Nonetheless, spoons are not exclusive to Vietnam. Spoon playing can be found throughout the world : in Ireland, Great Britain, in Western Europe (as a result of folk revival), in the United States, in Canada, in Russia, Turkey, Madagascar, Indonesia and the Philippines .

DAN MOI

The DAN MOI (DAN : instrument ; MOI : lips) is a Jew's harp (or jaw's harp) which is very common among Vietnamese tribal minorities. There exist two versions of this instrument in Vietnam : one of bronze, the other of bamboo. In spite of the numerous models of Jew's harps, of different shapes and materials, it could be said that its basic principle is common to all : a free lamella, with a direct or indirect attack, vibrating between the half-opened mouth, using the mouth cavity as a variable resonator. The instrument is often linked with super natural powers (Mongolia, Tuva, Yakutia), collective entertainment (the Genggong ensemble in Bali, Indonesia), and personal enjoyment (in many countries where the Jew's harp exists). It is a courting instrument (among the Hmong in Vietnam), as well as a pastoral instrument (Sicily in Italy). It is used in electro-acoustical musical research (the late Dr. Emile Leipp, John Wright and Tran Quang Hai) . The Jew's harp, in fact, has existed throughout the world for many centuries, and is known by the following names : guimbarde, trompe de Bearn (France), Jew's harp, Jaw's harp (Great Britain), maultrommel (Germany, Austria), scacciapensieri, marranzanu (Italy), munnharp (Norway), mundgige (Sweden), vargan (Russia), berimbau (Spain), chang (Afghanistan) morchang (Rajasthan, India), khomus (Yakutia, Tuva,

Mongolia), angkuoch (Cambodia), karinding (West Java), gengong (Bali), karombi (Sulawesi), verimbau (Portugal), mukkuri (Japan), etc... In Vietnam, the name changes according to many tribal minorities : roding (Jarai tribe) toung (Koho and Maa tribes), then (Bahnar tribe), guat (Roglai tribe), hoen toong (Thai tribe), pang teu ing (Muong tribe), rabncas (Hmong tribe), and dan moi (Vietnamese). In Asia alone one can find a great diversity of Jew's harps made of wood, bamboo, bone, ivory, metal with one, two, three, four and even five lamellas (in Taiwan only) . There are also Jew's harps in Europe, in several Asian countries, in New Guinea, in Africa (Hausa population in Niger, in Cameroon, and Xhosa in South Africa), in America (the Indians in Argentina). In Vietnam , the Jew's harp is an instrument for self entertainment (Jarai and some tribes of High Plateaus in Central Vietnam) and reserved for lovers (Hmong tribe in North Vietnam).

BACH YÊN's BIOGRAPHY

BACH YÊN (or "White Swallow") was born in the Mekong Delta, in South Vietnam. She began performing variety music in Saigon while still very young, learning to sing with ease in Vietnamese, French, English, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew. When she had made her name there she went to Paris, in 1961, with the idea of singing "à la Piaf", but Polydor, who had her under contract, wanted her to sing the then popular "sentimental twist", very sixties in style. Three albums and several videos came out of this first period in Europe, when she also toured in Belgium, Germany and Austria. She crossed the Atlantic in 1965 at Ed Sullivan's invitation, to appear in the renowned show, far and away the most widely watched in all the USA. America kept her a very long time, because the two weeks at first proposed became an engagement lasting twelve years ! Her growing popularity led to other television appearances - with stars like Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Joey Bishop, Mike Douglas, Pat Boone and others - and she appeared in 46 different US states and in Canada, Mexico, Caracas, Panama, Bogota and Curaçao, alongside great names like Jimmy Durante, Liberace and Frankie Avalon. Hollywood asked her to sing for the film "The Green Berets", starring John Wayne. Coming back to Paris marked a decisive change in Bach Yê'n's career. She met up with Trần Quang Hai, a brilliant musician and ethnomusicologist, who persuaded her to sing traditional Vietnamese music. This was the dawning of yet another of Bach Yê'n's varied talents. In company with Trần Quang Hai, she has since given over 2,000 recitals and concerts on the five continents. Together they have made 6 albums, one of which gained the Grand Prix du Disque from the Académie Charles Cros in 1983 - and now there is, of course, a CD. As an ardent and talented ambassador for Vietnamese music, Bach Yê'n is considered among the great artists of song, both modern and traditional.

TRAN QUANG HAI's BIOGRAPHY

Tran Quang Hai was born on May 13, 1944 in the country of Vietnam. He is a talented and renowned musician who comes from a family of five generations of musicians. He studied at the National Conservatory of Music in Saigon before moving in 1961 to France, where he studied the theory and practice of Oriental music with his father Professor Dr. Tran Van Khe, at the Center of Studies for Oriental Music in Paris. For several years, Tran Quang Hai also attended seminars on ethnomusicology at the Sorbonne University, the School of High

Studies for Social Sciences. Since 1966, he has given nearly 3,000 concerts in 60 countries, several hundreds school concerts in Norway (Rikskonsertene), in France (JMF – Jeunesses Musicales de France) in Belgium (JMB – Jeunesses Musicales de Belgique), and has taken part in more than one hundred international traditional music festivals, as well as in radio and television broadcasts in Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Australia. He has been working for the National Center for Scientific Research in France since 1968, and is now attached to the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Musée de l'Homme. Also, from 1988 to 1995 he was a Lecturer on Southeast Asian music at the University of Paris X-Nanterre. He has been a guest lecturer of over one hundred Universities in the world.

Apart from his artistic activities, he is also interested in musical research. He has improved the technique of spoon playing and of the Jew's harp. In 1970, he found by himself the key to the technique of overtone singing and has become the world famous expert of this peculiar split-tone singing *khoomi* well known in Tuva and Mongolia. During 1990 and 1991, he won four awards at the International Scientific Film Festivals in Estonia, France and Canada for his film "Le Chant des Harmoniques" (The Song of Harmonics) directed by Hugo Zemp. He is the co-author, actor and music composer of this film. He has written numerous articles on Vietnamese and Asian music (New Grove Dictionary, Encyclopedia Universalis), and has also recorded 15 LPs 8 CDs and 4 video films. He composed more than four hundred pop songs, and musical pieces for 16 stringed *zither dan tranh*, monochord *dan dôc huyền*, Jew's harp and overtone singing.

As a distinguished figure in his musical field, Tran Quang Hai has received more than 20 prizes and international awards. He has received a Gold Medal for music from the Asian Cultural Academy, and honorary doctorates from the International University Foundation and the Albert Einstein International Academy. He works with his wife, Bach Yen, who is a great Vietnamese pop and folk singer. Additionally, he was nominated President of the Jury of the *Khoomi* Throat Singing Festival in Kyzyl (Tuva) in 1995. He obtained the Cristal Medal of the National Center for Scientific Research in France in 1996, the Medal of Honor of the Limeil Brevannes city in France in 1998, and the Special Prize of the Jew's Harp World Festival in Molln (Austria) in 1998.. In addition, he was the Honorary President of the Festival d'Auch "Eclats des Voix" in France in 1999, and of the Voice Music Festival of Perouges "Au Fil de la Voix" in France in 2000. His biography has been published in 30 Who's Who reference books since 1979.

To date, Dr. Tran Quang Hai is the only Vietnamese to have taken part as a performer or composer in such great historical events as Australia's Bicentenary celebration in 1988, the Bicentenary of the French Revolution in Paris in 1989, the 700th Anniversary of the Discovery of America in 1992, 600 Years of Seoul-Korea in 1994, the Jubilee of the King of Thailand in 1996, and the 100th Anniversary of the Phonogramm Archiv of Berlin in Germany in 2000. In 2002, the French President Jacques Chirac decorated him as the Knight of the Legion of Honour, the highest distinction of France.