



With instruments crafted from a wide variety of materials—including, bamboo, silk, gourd, clay and stone—and played in a diverse range of styles, from single voices to richly melodic orchestral pieces, Chinese music is rich with history and yet accommodating of innovation.

In this series, you will hear three episodes that each explores a different aspect of Chinese music—the endangered music of the Yunnan peoples; the traditional sounds of the pipa, bamboo flute, qin and other Chinese instruments; and the creative space between them, where sounds ancient and avant-garde intersect.

Episode 1

Endangered Music

Living in a remote, mountainous region of China’s “Land of Clouds” has buffered the Yunnan people from the outside influences of non-native cultures for centuries. With a wide range of voice techniques and instruments as unusual and diverse as the tree leaf, the moon guitar and the spirit drum, the musicians of the minority ethnic groups of the Yunnan province of China now perform their traditional songs and dances before world audiences, sharing their native arts and way of life.

In this first of the series, Professor Lan Lan Wang, chair of the Connecticut College’s Dance Department and part of its China Yunnan/Mekong Project, discusses the art and culture of the Yunnan people, and the pressures of globalization that threaten their ancient cultural expressions.

Episode 2

Traditional Music

Despite China’s long musical history, Chinese orchestras are relatively new. The push for developing a distinctly Chinese performing arts repertoire came with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. In the years after, Chinese orchestras mirroring the operational style of Western orchestras, such as having a baton-waving conductor and divisions of instrument families, began to form.

Chinese orchestras initially focused on indigenous folk music, but in the last twenty years, they have developed and performed new works, and their four sections-- bowed-strings, plucked-strings, wind and percussion—have been augmented with new instruments with lower pitch ranges to balance the high pitches of the more traditional instruments. In this second piece in our series, join scholar Joanna Lee as she guides classroom audiences through the sounds and structures of the traditional Chinese orchestra.

Episode 3

Creative Crossroads

Composer and self-described “musical anthropologist” Tan Dun (perhaps best familiar for his Oscar-winning score to the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) creates works that bridge time, place and culture through the fusion of ancient and avant-garde sounds

Celebrating the vocal, instrumental, and environmental sounds of the remote Chinese countryside, Tan explores the minority cultures of Hunan Province, where he was born, and brings it into play with modern instruments and orchestrations.

Expanding on the video and audio field recordings gathered for his multimedia concerto, *The Map*, a Concerto for Cello, Video, and Orchestra, Tan and scholar Joanna Lee discuss the vanishing musical cultures of ethnic minorities in western Hunan and reflect on the creative challenges of preserving cultural legacies while creating new music fusing traditional, indigenous and contemporary sounds.