

celestial harmonies

stream flowing:
traditional music from china
WENG zhenfa
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the artists

WENG Zhenfa is a state *Grade One* musician. Currently, he is a soloist with the Shanghai Traditional Music Orchestra and a member of both the Chinese Musicians' Association and the Chinese Film Association.

As one of the most eminent sheng players in China, WENG Zhenfa was selected by the Shanghai Film Orchestra, one of the five major traditional music orchestras in China. He has been a sheng soloist since an early age. During a distinguished performing career, he has won numerous awards and has been invited to perform in many countries and regions including Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Greece, Belgium, Luxemburg, Canada, Germany, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. In particular, he has given many solo performances in Germany.

WENG Zhenfa is also a famous sheng educator and a number of his students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music have become principal players and soloists in various ensembles throughout China.

Born in Xinjiang, FU Renchang started yangqin studies at the Special School of Music in Shanghai in 1980 and has won several national competitions. Between 1989 and 1993, he studied conducting at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1994 he became conductor of the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra.

FU Renchang has conducted several orchestras in China and Germany. At present, he is a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the chief conductor of Sinfonie Orchester Berlin. As a yangqin player, he has given many concerts in China, Germany, Japan and Canada. As a guest artist, he has played yangqin in performances with the Berliner Philharmoniker under Claudio Abbado, with the Dresden Symphoniker, and with the BBC Manchester Symphony Orchestra.

The Shanghai Film Orchestra can also be heard on Celestial Harmonies' 1989 recording of Terry Riley's IN C (Celestial Harmonies 13026-2).

the project

A coproduction between Radio Berlin-Brandenburg and Celestial Harmonies, STREAM FLOWING is an exquisite recording of traditional music from China, featuring the sheng (Chinese mouth-organ) and yangqin (hammered dulcimer).

the instruments

The **sheng** is one of China's traditional musical instruments. With a sound similar to that of a European pipe organ, its tone is very clear, piercing and full. It is able to play harmony and multi-voice parts.

The unique shape of the sheng is sometimes compared to the phoenix. The two symmetrical arrays of pipes symbolize the wings of the legendary immortal bird. The earliest historical records of the sheng appear over three thousand years ago. Confucius, the great philosopher of ancient China, also wrote about the sheng in his anthology of poems.

For thousands of years, through successive dynasties, the sheng has been regarded as an important musical instrument for royal musical ensembles. It has also won a place in the hearts of ordinary people. In the 1930s, modern musicians started a new round of improvement of the sheng. However, it was not until the establishment of the People's Republic of China that innovations achieved lasting change. Recognizing the importance of keeping the sheng's traditional features, musicians expanded its sound range, improved its sound quality and multiplied its performance functions.

The earliest version of the yangqin was the Persian santur, a form of hammered dulcimer. The Chinese yangqin was introduced to China by Europeans around four-hundred years ago. Ye Mengzhu, a scholar at the end of the Ming Dynasty, mentioned in his books that Europeans played a Western (yang) zither (qinse) on a foreign commercial ship anchored near Shanghai.

Once the **yangqin** had been introduced, it became popular among ordinary people and evolved into the natural accompaniment to traditional drama and regional opera. It was very small, its range of sound was limited and the playing technique was relatively simple. With the unswerving efforts of Chinese musicians, the yangqin nowadays has a wide sound range and beautiful sound quality, and has become a very important Chinese musical instrument.

