

MUSIC FROM NORTH & SOUTH VIETNAM

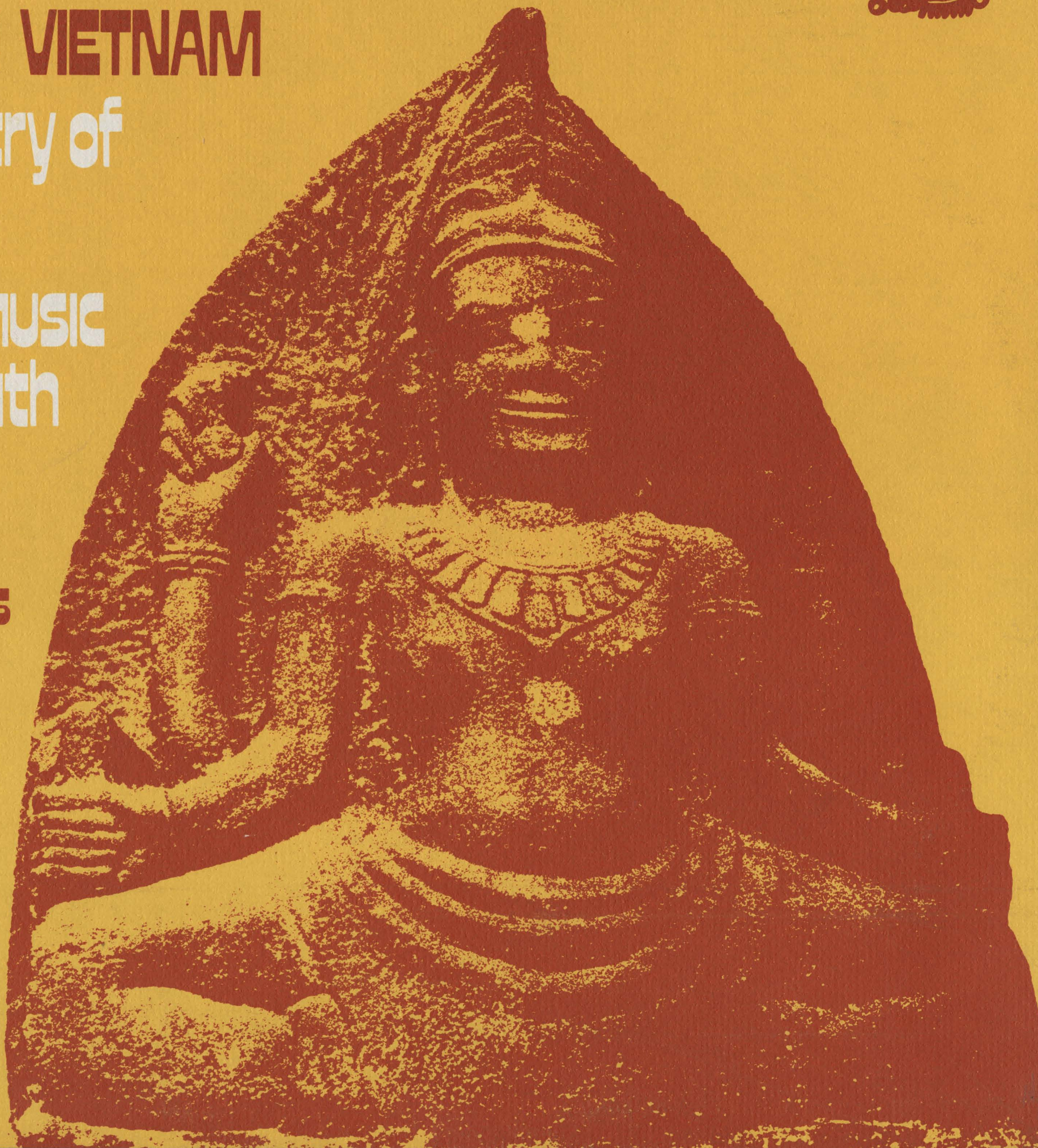
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4219



Sung Poetry of
the North

Theatre Music
of the South

Recorded &
Annotated by
Stephen Addiss



FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4219

Side 1

Band 1. Ca Ra Bo (scene)	6:29
Band 2. Modern Tu Ogi Ogn (sung)	2:37
Band 3. Tune for Vong Co (tranh)	1:37
Band 4. Later Elaboration on Vong Co (tranh)	1:30
Band 5. Old Vong Co (sung)	2:07
Band 6. New Vong Co (sung)	4:02
Band 7. Scene from Modern Cai Luong	2:42

Side 2

Band 1. Ba'e Phan (with poem)	5:00
Band 2. Ty-Ba (with poem 1st phrase)	1:23
(20 years ago)	
Band 2a. " " (1st phrase. . Today)	1:08
Band 2b. " " (Entire Poem)	6:25
Band 3. Hoi Phong-Da (with poem)	8:07

© 1971 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. 70-751990

WARNING: UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION OF THIS
RECORDING IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW AND SUBJECT TO
CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.

MUSIC FROM NORTH & SOUTH VIETNAM

Sung Poetry of
the North

Theatre Music of
the South

Recorded & Annotated
by Stephen Addiss

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4219

MUSIC FROM NORTH & SOUTH VIETNAM



Sung poetry of
the North



Theatre music of
the South



Recorded & Annotated
by Stephen Addiss

INTRODUCTION

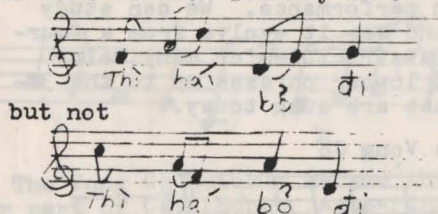
Vietnam, for a small country, has many differing kinds of music. The North, the Center, and the South each have their own forms of theater, chamber music, ritual and ceremonial music, and special singing and playing styles have developed in each region. In addition, there is the music of the old Cham kingdom in what is now South Vietnam, and the music of the many minority groups called montagnards or moi.

Even the language changes from place to place. The words are monosyllabic and depend on tones for differentiation. In the North there are six different tones: high rising, level, low falling, low rising, and two kinds of midrising. In the South the latter two are the same, so the total tone range is five, in the Center only four. The signs are these:

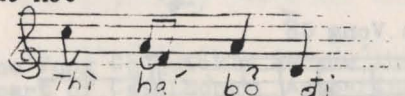
má high rising; ma level; mà low falling

ma low rising; mã and mả mid rising.

The melody as sung must obey the rules of the word tones. You may have



but not



The primary influence on Vietnamese music is that of China. In South Vietnam, however, the Southeast Asian influence, through the Chams and Cambodians, becomes much stronger and changes the scales and performing patterns. Nonetheless, most of the music of Vietnam is based on Chinese models and played on instruments much like Chinese counterparts.

Some of the most characteristic kinds of Vietnamese music that have developed special styles of their own are the Hát á Odo, or sung poetry of the North, and the Cải Lương or Theater music of the South.

Previous Folkways records of Vietnamese music are:

FE 4352, Music of Vietnam, a compendium of classical, folk, and minority group music, and

FT 1303, Folksongs of Vietnam.

Cải Lương, the Modern Theater Music of South Vietnam

Side I

Cải Lương

Cải Lương, unlike most forms of Vietnamese music with beginnings shrouded in the past, began in 1917. A group of civil servants organized a performance they called Ca Ra Bô, singing with gestures, and instead of using the traditional Hát Bội they took some of the chamber music of the South, (called "music of the amateurs" after coming down from Ca Huế), and set a text on top of the familiar tune Tứ Bai Oán. They set a portion of the long poem Lục Vân Tiên, using a section they called Búi Kiêm Nguyệt Nga. With some talking but mostly singing, this told how Búi Kiêm, after failing in his examinations returns to his home. His uncle has rescued Nguyệt Nga, a lovely young girl who threw herself in the river after an unhappy love. Búi Kiêm falls in love with the girl and all ends happily. This first little play takes less than 15 minutes, and was just part of a variety program, but it led to a new and most popular kind of musical theater. The first performance in fact was a benefit for French war relief in the First World War, but already by 1918 this form had its first full-length presentation on its own merit.

The first performers were amateurs, but in the next year musicians and singers from other forms of music, minstrels and Hát Bội actors entered the field. The beginning of the name Cải Lương seems to have been in 1920, to distinguish it from a kind of modernized Hát Bội called Tuồng Tàu. Later Tuồng Tàu referred to the Chinese classical plays in Cải Lương, with old legends, fantastic costumes and raucous orchestration retained from Hát Bội, while Tuồng Tây referred to the more Europeanized stories, often Vietnamese dramas but sometimes also versions of tales of Victor Hugo, Dumas, and other French authors. One popular favorite was Trà Hoa Nữ, la Dame au Camillias (or La Traviata) in Vietnamese!

A large group of new plays were written for the immediately popular Cải Lương, emphasizing Vietnamese stories and praising individualism and freedom rather than the traditional Confucian virtues of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In the late '20s and '30s adventure

stories and popular novels were adopted for use, including Roman adventures of the Ben Hur type, known as Tuồng Kiếm Hiệp La Mã. In the '40s, the war years brought forth two new types, Tuồng Chiếm Tranh, war dramas, and Tuồng Dã Sử Liệt Sĩ, patriotic Vietnamese legends. The spirit of freedom was well-served by these later dramas, which the French could not censor as they used old legends of Vietnam to remind the audience of the Viet Minh battles of the current time.

In the war dramas, often set in imaginary countries with newly-invented uniforms used for the first time as costumes, the actors played battle scenes with movies of war used as a background with tanks, planes, and large guns.

Forms of Cải Lương reached both the North and the Center of Vietnam, using local musics behind the singing, but the greatest popularity of this form was and is in the South. In the '50s more and more kinds of stories found their way into Cải Lương, including Samson and Delilah and Rashoman. The '60s saw a melange of the different kinds of dramas, and nowadays one may find anything from a love story to an ancient legend to a Buddhist story to a fanciful tale of make-believe kingdoms of other worlds.

Of course the music had to grow with the medium, and using familiar chamber-music favorites, with new words to the melodies, did not long suffice. Many new kinds of tunes were invented, the most important of which was the Vọng Cổ. There are various opinions as to how this melody started, perhaps as a folk tune or perhaps composed. In any case its first full appearance, even in simple form, was as Da Cổ or Da Co Hoài Lang:

Moderato $\text{♩} = c. 60$ Da Cổ Hoài Lang (circa 1920)(tranh)

At this point it is still using the scale of the Center, do re fa sol la, but it rapidly changed to the scale of the South, do mi fa sol la, also called the Vọng Cổ scale.

Vọng Cổ Scale

Two other versions of the same tune were found by asking some of the elderly singers to sing the earliest versions of Vọng Cổ:

A Early Vọng Cổ (as sung)

A² Early Vọng Cổ (as sung)

The comparison of the three examples shows that as in all Vietnamese music the notes are free, with a structure providing the basis, the musical map, for the performers to improvise on. The words may dictate part of the actual melody, as a high-rising inflection on a word cannot be sung on a downward melody, but much of the improvisation is the attempt by the singer and the musicians to add life and meaning to a traditional form. The form of Vọng Cổ has remained the same by having the freedom to grow in performance. We can study the first phrase and see it evolve from a four-measure melody to a structure for many melodies through 8 and 16-bar phrases up to the 32-measure phrases that are sung today.

B 4 Measure Vọng Cổ

C 8 Measure Vọng Cổ

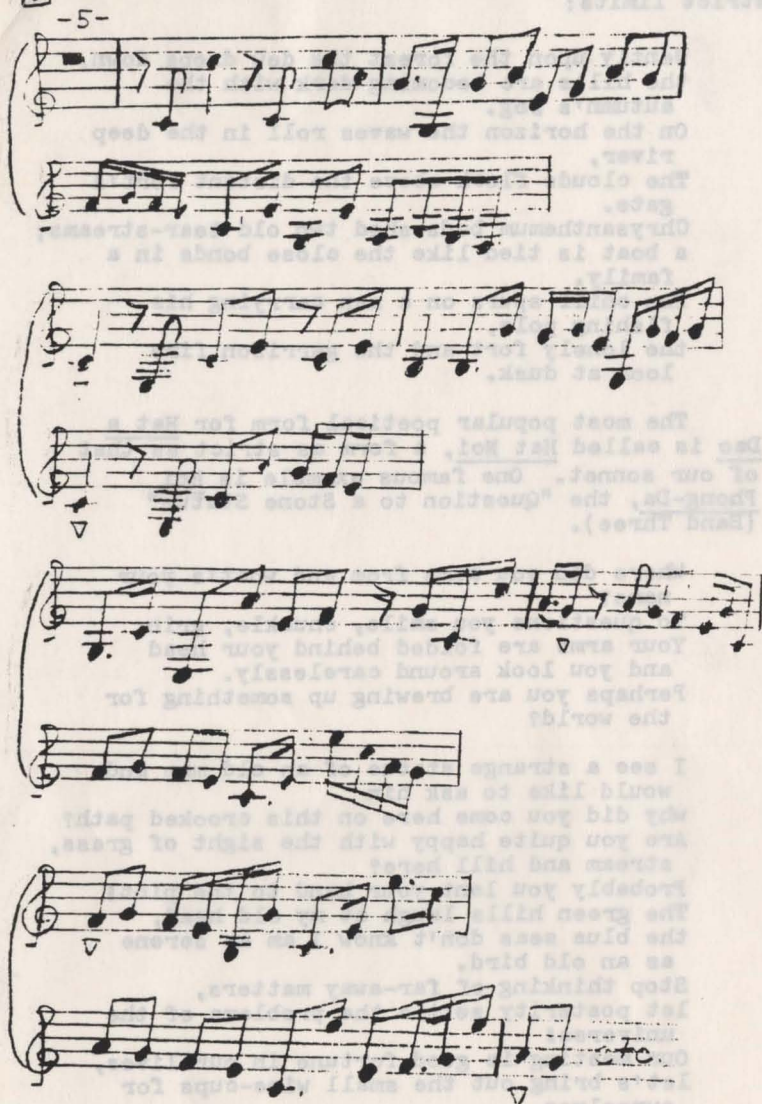
When Vọng Cổ changed from 8 to 16 measure phrases the structure changed slightly:

Vọng Cổ Structure (changes to) 16 Measure Structure

(measure 9 11 13 15 17)

A 16-measure opening phrase might be played in this fashion on the tranh:

16 Measure Vong Cồ (circa 1945)



The Vong Cồ quickly became the most popular part of Cải Lương. Appearing several times in every drama, it might be sung by any important character, or even as a duet trading off melodic lines. Vong Cồ, primarily a form representing sadness and nostalgia, might be a lullaby, a love song, or even an expression of anger. The improvised introduction to the piece, in which a singer could try her most langorous tones, became so popular that the applause would interrupt the aria when the main body of the piece began, and nowadays some singers will add another introduction in free rhythm in the middle of the piece. Popular records in Vietnam, now mostly at 45 rpm, might begin with a tango or chacha and break into Vong Cồ in the middle, so pervasive is this tune structure. A singer who cannot sing a good Vong Cồ can never succeed in Cải Lương.

The other music in Cải Lương is mostly based on the amateur chamber music, and as such divides into the happy and lively mode of Bắc and the sadder modes of Nam, the latter including the nuances xuân, đào, ái and oán, the last of which is the same nuance as the

vong cồ. In addition, the Chinese theater groups that came to Cholon (a suburb of Saigon) brought Cantonese music, which impressed Vietnamese musicians enough to form a type of song they called Quang style, a bright kind of series of tunes in the do re fa sol la pentatonic in imitation of Cantonese music.

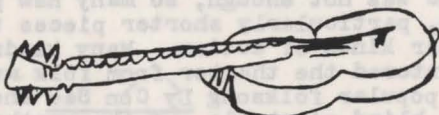
The growth of Cải Lương made it necessary to have a great deal of additional music. The chamber music was not enough, so many new pieces were written, particularly shorter pieces to fit particular kinds of action. Many kinds of music also entered the theater from folk music, such as the popular folksong Lý Côn Sao and the music of the blind minstrels, of the soothsayers and diviners, and even of European sources made their entrance. I even heard the theme from the movie "Exodus" played at a Cải Lương performance, sounding very out of place amidst the otherwise totally traditional melodies.

Declamations often preceed the songs, such as Noi Lôi before recitatives, Lôi Bắc before the happy tunes and Lôi Ai before sad ones. Certain pieces of music are played in most dramas, such as Xuan xe when a hero is retreating, Tau ma when a horse is pantomimed, and Western style melodies under the heading of Bài ta theo điệu Tây, in the dramas on Western themes. The use of Buddhist music is mainly for the religious theme play, called Tuồng Phật, while the chants of the sorcerers are used in the magic dramas Tuồng Tiên.

A writer making up a new Cải Lương operetta, for that is what the form most resembles, can select from at least 100 melody types or tune-formulas already known to the performers and audience. He will write a new set of lyrics for each piece, and some spoken passages as well as stage action. Actors in the larger troupes learn their parts word for word, while smaller troupes improvise many of the actual lines from a rough draft of the plot. Most important is that the leading players will have a chance at a spectacular vong cồ at climactic moments, and that each of the main performers has both musical and dramatic exploits to perform. A successful Cải Lương star is the one kind of Vietnamese traditional musician to earn more than a decent living nowadays; these stage favorites are the equivalent of last Century's opera divas and today's movie stars of the West. Singing is the most important feature of the Cải Lương, as 70% to 80% of a performance may be devoted to song, accompanied by melody instruments such as the tranh, moonlute, and 2-string violin improvising around the melody. In Hát Bội, entrances and exits were set to drums and cymbals, in Cải Lương, it is to wooden clappers.

The instrumentation in Cải Lương has varied over the years, but usually has included the zither-like tranh, the 2-string moonlute (nguyệt) and the nhị violin as stated before, and clappers. For the Chinese style dramas, the sona oboe, gongs and drums appear, and also occasionally a clarinet-like instrument kouan, and 36-string yang k'in somewhat like our hammered dulcimer. A flute is frequently heard, as are other forms of 2-string violins and lutes, in the more lyric pieces. Western instruments have also been used, such as the mandolin, saxophone, snare drum, piano, clarinet, and trumpet. The only Western instrument that has really made a place for itself in Cải Lương,

however, is the guitar. This instrument is used, of course, in folk music, but is also heard in many Cải Lương troupes in various forms. It may be similar to a Western guitar in EADGBE tuning, or be tuned in fifths and octaves. It has even been adopted to the Vietnamese love of "bent" tones by being hollowed out between frets, with extra room for the player to add melodic slides and quarter-tones to the notes.



Cải Lương has increased its popularity over the years by being able to change with the tides of history and musical fashion. It has been estimated that in 1964 there were 75 professional troupes of Cải Lương in Vietnam, compared with 10 of Hat Bội, itself a generous estimate. Although perhaps the least pure of traditional musical forms, Cải Lương has in its borrowing retained musical elements that would otherwise be lost, and with its 50 or so musical numbers per performance it has provided the major outlet for the singers and instrumentalists of South Vietnam to gain a hearing and make a living.

Side II

Hat a Dao, the sung poetry of North Vietnam

Hat a Dao is one of the oldest arts of Vietnam, starting more than five hundred years ago. At first it was a ceremonial music, with dancing and acrobatics, used for religious and state ceremonies. Soon each province of what was then Vietnam, now North Vietnam, had its own Hat a Dao teams and competitions. Over the centuries it became intellectualized, became a kind of chamber music, and finally reached the point of being the medium for singing the finest lyric poetry of Vietnam. A poet would dedicate a new poem to a friend, and have a singer sing it to him, accompanied by the long three-string lute Dan Day, and with the recipient of the poem beating a small drum, adding to the rhythm and also expressing his comments by how he struck the drum. The poems were usually lyrical and nostalgic, such as Bao Phan (Band One):

The lotus-flower fades away-
My sorrow is long, but the days are short,
and now winter has yielded its place to
spring.
Where can I find again my longtime friend?
Accepting fate and this turning world, I
miss him very much.
His life has moved him from place to place
like a stranger;
Perhaps nostalgia will send him back to
his old home.

As well as Vietnamese poems, Hat a Dao was used for the Vietnamese adaptations of famous Chinese works, such as by the great T'ang Peet Tu Fu: Ty Ba, (Band Two). On this record we have the first phrase as sung twenty years ago,

then sung today, then another singer doing the whole poem. This is to show the freedom that the singer has to improvise within certain strict limits:

Gently upon the forest the dew drops down,
the hills are becoming dark with the
autumn's fog.
On the horizon the waves roll in the deep
river,
The clouds flock above the distant fort's
gate.
Chrysanthemum beds shed two old tear-streams;
a boat is tied like the close bonds in a
family.
The chill spurs on a man carrying his
fishing pole,
the lonely fort and the garrison fire
loom at dusk.

The most popular poetical form for Hat a Dao is called Hat Noi, a form as strict as that of our sonnet. One famous example is Hoi Phong-Da, the "Question to a Stone Statue" (Band Three).

Where did you come from and what's your
name?
To questions you smile, chuckle, grin;
Your arms are folded behind your head
and you look around carelessly.
Perhaps you are brewing up something for
the world?

I see a strange statue of an old man and
would like to ask him
why did you come here on this crooked path?
Are you quite happy with the sight of grass,
stream and hill here?
Probably you lent your hand to the plot!
The green hills laugh at my old head,
the blue seas don't know I am as serene
as an old bird.
Stop thinking of far-away matters,
let posterity settle the problems of the
universe!
Our meeting is good fortune in our lives,
let's bring out the small wine-cups for
ourselves.
Drunken now, lucid then, we can express
our thoughts...
But to both good and bad ideas the statue
keeps nodding.

Hat a Dao is now a dying art, as in the North it is not considered a people's music due to its intellectualization and complexity, and in the South only refugees sing and enjoy it. The singing is inward rather than outward, the tone repressed, the subtleties of expression and the drawing out of the words mean everything. Vietnamese is a tonal language, meaning each one-syllable word has a tone, rising, falling, high middle or low. The singer must follow the tones, adding melody to the already melodic language. There is no real equivalent form of poetry-cum-music in another country, the closest thing is perhaps German 19th century Lieder, except that in Germany the poems were only rarely written directly to be sung. On this record we have readings of the poems first, then the singing.

MUSIC RECORDED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED BY
STEPHEN ADDISS.