Music of Viet Nam

Tribal music of the Highland People
Traditional Music
Folksongs

Selected by
Pham Duy
with the collaboration of
Stephen Addiss and
Bill Crofut

Ethnic Folkways Library FE 4352
A: PRE-VIETNAMESE MUSIC
TRIBAL MUSIC OF THE MGBLAND PEOPLE
Xylophone TO RUNG
Calebus-Zither TING
Concert of Goags
Calebus-Khene KNBOAT
Folk Dance of THAI people
DANCE XOE
SURVEY MUSICAL OF CHAM PEOPLE
Ritual Music
Love Song OOB DAM
TARA
Historical Song CHAY DALIM
Funeral Song OOH DAM MUT AI

B: TRADITIONAL MUSIC
ANCIENT IMPERIAL MUSIC
Ritual Music
Big Orchestra DAI NHAC
Music Ballet MA VU
Music of Classical Theatre NAM CHEN
CHAMBER MUSIC
Classic Quintet NGU TUYET
HOA TAI BUI LIU TUYO
HOU PHUONG THU

C: FOLK SONGS
ANCIENT FOLK SONGS
HO RU CON (lullaby)
HO NEN (work song)
HO GLA GAO (Rice pounding song)
HO MAI DN (Boat-women song)
NEW FOLK SONGS by PHAM DUY
HO LO (peasant song)
GANBUI LUA (carrying paddy song)

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE
INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSIC OF VIETNAM
by Pham Duy

There are two kinds of music in Viet Nam:

I. PRE-VIETNAMESE MUSIC, a name given to all the music of the ethnic minorities living on the Indochinese peninsula before the political formation of Viet Nam proper. This music, of a purely popular character, still conserves its archaic traits in spite of the passage of time and contact with other more highly developed civilizations.

II. VIETNAMESE MUSIC, consisting of a popular and rural music termed "profane music," and an urban music called "learned music" which includes the official music of the old Imperial Court and music for the entertainment of the courtiers. This specifically Vietnamese music is often called "classical music" or "traditional music."

PRE-VIETNAMESE MUSIC

This consists of:

I. Tribal music of the Montagnards of the high plateaus in Central Viet Nam, one of the oldest musical manifestations in the world; thriving today in the form of Hunting Songs, Fishing Songs, Love Songs, Festival Songs, Funeral Songs and Story-Songs. In all these forms, each tribe possesses a "signature-melody" of its own, which is recognized as belonging only to a particular tribe, similar to typical costumes or ornaments.

The musical instruments are relatively ordinary, mostly made of bamboo, like the To Rung, a xylophone played throughout the whole country. The gourd zither Ting Ning of the Bahmar tribe has at least eight metal strings, played by strumming the instrument with the fingers while supporting the zither on the stomach. The gourd khene is also very popular in the High Plateau region under the name of Knboat or Mbuat. It lives in drinking parties, where drinking or love songs are played. The gongs, plates or basins, are highly esteemed by the Montagnards. The wealth of a hamlet is gauged by the number of gongs possessed by the inhabitants. The gong orchestra can number anywhere from 2 to 6 gongs. Larger ones are sometimes added. Gongs are used in all festivals, ceremonies and rites.

Besides these instruments, one might find the bamboo harp termed Roding which is similar to the Valia used in Madagascar. The mouth harp, called the Toung, should also be mentioned--it is a close relative of the Balinesian Genggong.

II. The music of the different peoples living in the High Regions of North Viet Nam is also considered to be primitive music. It is precisely in this region that one might find bronze drums dating from the dong son age. Even at the beginning of this century, bronze drums were still used in the Muong tribe (Hoa Binh Province) for village ceremonies. The music of the North Vietnamese Montagnards is generally ceremonial music, sorcery music, dialogue songs, love songs, marriage songs, etc. The best known instruments are the Dan Tinh guitar played to an accompaniment of bells in the Tho tribe of the Lang Son province. With the Meo tribe of Lao Kay province, the khene is used, similar to that used by the Laotians. With the Thai Rouge tribe of Lang Chanh, split wood drums, bells, gongs and "lithophones Kanh" are used, all coming from China. The Thai Blanches of Lai Chau have created a sort of dance called Xoe to greet the arrival of invited guests.

The music of this region is characterized by portamento, glissandi in the melody, brusque alterations of the voice and the use of feminine voices making sounds which remind us of the meow of a cat. This fact proves that the music of the Montagnards does not derive from either that of China or that of the Vietnamese Delta.

Although the instrumental music of this region is not highly developed, one should say that the folk songs are very important there: work songs, nocturnal reverie songs, love songs, all of these are a kind of poetical game sung without accompaniment, and which are most pleasing to the ear because of the indefinable purity of sounds which only the montagnards know how to create.

III. What remains of the "Cham" music is worthy of study if one wants to know a little of what is left of a great civilization. At the beginning of the fourth century, a chinese traveller, Ma Tuan Ling, while visiting the Champa kingdom, remarked that the Cham orchestra was made up of a five string viol, drums, trumpets and castanets. In present-day Viet Nam, The Cham people, living in the province of Binh Thuan (South-Central Viet Nam) and now numbering no more than a hundred thousand, still conserve their traditional music. A ritual music is necessary for the religious life of the Chams, who have many occasions throughout the year to celebrate such rites as the opening of the doors of the ancient Cham Towers, the beginning of work or irrigation, the anniversaries of Cham heroes elevated to the realm of spirits. On all these occasions, an orchestra composed of one or two Sarinai oboes (derived from the Hindu Sahni), two double Ganang drums, a skin drum called Barinung, a small Cheng gong combine to play ceremonial songs or sacred dances. The young girls like to imitate butterflies by dancing with their fans.

Cham folklore has many love songs--they are called DODAM DARA. These are poems sung to sad melodies. The historical song is also quite popular.
All the grandeur and decadence of the Kingdom of Champa is recounted through these story-songs.

It has often been said that the sad music of Viet Nam derives from the Cham music. Historical documents have even related that, in the Second Century, a Vietnamese king who had invaded the Cham country brought back prisoners who were then ordered to teach sad music to the king's musicians. In any case if we compare the remains of Cham music with Vietnamese music as such, it is evident that the former is poorer in musical forms and in melodies. Vietnamese music is more brilliant, whereas the Cham music still remains primarily as an example of funeral music, (DODAM MUTAI) which the great priests sang to the family of the deceased while accompanied by a Kanhi viol (two strings) made of a turtle shell. While the Vietnamese musical scale is evenly formed with more or less precise intervals according to each region, the Cham melody still remains at the level of a continually sliding melody, which is only the beginning of the formation of a musical scale.

This should be divided into two branches:

I. Ancient Imperial Music and Entertainment music for the Courtiers, which in turn can be considered as "learned music," since it follows more or less rigorous principles, laws and disciplines.

a. Court Music, well organized after the tenth century, continues through the first half of the twentieth century and ends with the last Nguyen king. It was developed and formed by following the example of the official music of China. One finds ritual music (for the king's audience), ceremonial music (Temple music, music for the five sacrifices of the Esplanade of Heaven...), banquet and ballet music. A Royal Theatre, belonging above all to the Queen Mother, had in its productions many purely Vietnamese characteristics, such as southern songs, local stories and personages, typical costumes, even though the theatre had as its artistic basis the classical Chinese tradition. This theatre of songs and gestures called Hat Do served as a basis for the formation of the popular and regional Vietnamese theatres.

This court music, no longer used in present-day Viet Nam, is still maintained by the Tourism Service at Hue. What was formerly available only to the kings is now to be enjoyed by all those who wish to know the music of the past.

The orchestra of the king, called Dai Nhac (Great Music) in its days of glory, was composed of more than forty musicians playing sand drums, flutes, horns, conches, gongs, lithophones, lutes, carillons and castanets. The orchestra nowadays consists of only the Ken Dam oboe, the Dan Nhí viol, the Trong drum, the Chap Choa cymbals the Senh Tien castanets and the Sao flute. The royal dancers are also retained to execute the lantern or flower dances during receptions.

b. Entertainment music for the courtiers can be classified as chamber music, never being heard beyond a small circle of citizens, mandarins or intelligentsia. North Viet Nam has a chamber music called Hat A Dao (Song of the singers) which has an ancient source in ceremonial music. Its formation and development took place during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries when the great poets or philosophers contributed to its success by creating songs which had a great value both from a literary and musical point of view. In effect, the Hat A Dao chamber music of North Viet Nam is only a good means utilized by the poets to...
have their songs sung by good singers accompanied by a player of the long guitar. The person who listens to the Hat A Dao should also contribute to a part of the song and the music by making known his praise or criticism by means of a small drum called Trong De. The Hat A Dao only has a small number of songs, but the singer, musician and even the listener must follow certain musical laws, which makes it possible to classify the Hat A Dao as "learned music."

Central Viet Nam, Hue above all, the former capital of the country, is the cradle of another kind of chamber music: Ca Hue. It is an art which was brought forth by a group of princes and mandarins not long ago. Being all talented musicians, they created this chamber music which later became very popular in all Viet Nam. The high society of Hue, like the literate class in the past, needed to express itself through poetry or music. Ca Hue was born of the necessity of the literate group in Hue to sing their own poetical works. The Hue chamber music could not be imagined without the aid of a female singer who sings the same songs with different words written by more or less famous authors.

The Ca Hue possesses a certain number of songs belonging to three different modal systems: the songs from the North (Bac), the songs from the south (Nam) and the "Dung" songs. These songs are not similar among themselves because of the particular placement of the notes on the pentatonic scale. The repertory of the Ca Hue is quite large. In the songs from the North, expressing joy, tranquility, and serenity, one might cite the following pieces: Luu Thuy (The water which flows), Co Ban (Ancient song), Kim Tien (Silver coin), Phu Luc (Trip by land), etc. The songs from the south express sadness, pain, suffering: Nam Ai (Lamentation), Qua Phu (The widow) Tu Dai (Four generations) etc. One can change the tune of a piece and thus give it a new name: thus Co Ban (song from the North) played with a southern melody takes the name of Co Ban Dung (Changed song).

The Ca Hue orchestra is made up traditional instruments: the Dan Trang zither with 16 strings, the Ty Ba lute, the Nhi viol, the Nguyet lute in the form of a half-moon, the one-stringed Bau... also the Tieu flute and the Sao transverse flute often accompany the Ca Hue.

In South Viet Nam, chamber music has a local name: music of amateurs, called Nhac Tai Tu, but it is evident that it is only a prolongation of Ca Hue. The same instruments are used, but new songs are composed like the country songs (Oan) the songs in the cantonese style (Quang). The songs will help the expansion of the popular theatre of South Viet Nam, Hat Cai Luong.

II. Folk Music of the three regions. PROFANE MUSIC is the most important in Viet Nam, whether in the past or the present. The wealth of this music is such that in North Viet Nam alone more than 2000 different folk songs have been found.

As a preliminary attempt in classification, the different kinds of folk music in Viet Nam should be named:

In the North, one might cite the Ho work songs, the songs celebrating different occupations, varying from one region to the other. As examples, let us cite the woodcutters songs Ho Do Ta Keo Go, the weaver's songs Ho Du Chi, the ferryman's songs Ho Khoan, the mason's songs Ho Quay, the rice cutter's songs Ho Xay Lua, etc. In Central and South Viet Nam, the songs about work and profession (Ho) are even more developed: The digger's songs Ho Nen, the irrigation songs Ho O, the beaters's songs Ho Hui, the paddy worker's songs Ho Gia Gao, the rice plantation songs Ho Cay Lua, the river funeral songs Ho Dua Linh, etc.

The festival songs Hat Quan Ho, Hat Trong Quan, are widespread in the North. These are dialogue songs, sung during the spring and autumn festivals, after a good harvest. One can, through these festival and love songs, find the soul of the Vietnamese nation: peace-loving, sensitive to the beauty of things, generous, serene, not at all mystical, realistic but still with a sense of poetry...

The blind men's songs Hat Dam, found throughout Viet Nam, are full of filial piety, loyalty, fine sentiments, sung from village to village by these blind singers.

Although the learned music in Viet Nam, such as the ancient imperial music, the Hat A Dao and the Ca Hue cease evolving toward new horizons, the folk music of the three regions enjoys continuing innovations which give it new life from time to time.

Many new composers of songs, taking root from the inspiration and the musical materials of the people,
using the musical forms through techniques learned in Western schools, still reflect the soul of the contemporary Vietnamese. Esteeming the songs of the mirror of the past and making use of ancient resources, these new artists of the people intend to give artistic form to the present day Viet Nam by means of songs which carry the rhythm of the present and which will bring to future generations the image of a past made up of battles, grandeur and misery of the Vietnamese people.

MUSIC OF VIET NAM

selected, noted, with singing, by PHAM DUY with the collaboration of stephen addiss and bill crofut.

I - PRE-VIETNAMESE MUSIC:

Band 1:

a) TRIBAL MUSIC OF HIGHLAND PEOPLE (Center-Viet Nam)

1) XYLOPHONE TO RUNG of Bahnar tribe.
2) CALEBASS-ZITHER TING NING of Bahnar tribe.
3) CONCERT of GONGS of Bahnar tribe
4) CALEBASS-KHENE KNBOAT of sedang tribe.

Band 2:

b) FOLK DANCE of THAI PEOPLE (north-Viet Nam)

5) DANCE XOE (Dance with the comic hats)

Band 3:

c) SURVEY MUSICAL of CHAM PEOPLE (South Center-Viet Nam)

6) RITUAL MUSIC:
   a) OBOE SARINAI
   b) TWINS DRUMS GANANG.
7) LOVE SONG DOH DAM TARA singing by 3 girls.
8) HISTORICAL SONG CHAY DALIM singing by old man with the drum BARINUNG.
9) FUNERAL SONG DOH DAM MUTAI singing with the viola KANHI.

Band 4:

II - TRADITIONAL MUSIC:

a) ANCIENT IMPERIAL MUSIC (Hue, Center-Viet Nam)

10) RITUAL MUSIC: BIG ORCHESTRA DAI NHAC.

11) MUSIC of BALLET: MA VU (Dance of the horse)
12) MUSIC of CLASSICAL THEATRE: NAM CHIEN (Air of the warrior)

SIDE II

Band 1:

b) CHAMBER MUSIC

13) CLASSICAL QUINTET NGU TUYET: ZITHER TRANH 16 strings
    DAO BAC (Improvisations of each of the instruments with the NORTH MODAL SYSTEM)

Band 2:

HOA TAU bai LUU THUY (playing the piece THE MOVED WATER)

Band 3:

14) SOLO FLUTE: PHUONG VU (Dance of the Phoenix) by NGUYEN DINH NGHIA.

III - FOLK SONGS:

a) ANCIENT FOLK SONGS

Band 4:

15) HO RU CON (Lullaby)

Band 5:

16) HO NEN (Work song)

Band 6:

17) HO GIA GAO (Rice pounding song)
It has been our pleasure to help in a small way in the preparation of this record. Amazingly enough, there is nowhere in the world a record that would serve as an introduction to the many kinds of music in Vietnam - we now fill the gap.

This disc was made up of selections from recordings made by Pham Duy over two decades. He has gotten on tape every kind of traditional and folk music in the country. He has recorded in Vietnam. He has also well represented the other minority groups of Vietnam, who go under the general heading of Montagnards. Finally, he has recorded the best performers of tradition Vietnamese music. We helped him select from his extensive tape library the selections for this record, which we hope are both interesting and representative.

As well as a musicologist, Pham Duy is perhaps the foremost composer of his country, both in folk and classical idioms. We prevailed upon him to sing three of his own songs for this record. These are folk songs just as the songs of Woody Guthrie now belong to all Americans. When Bill and I sang Ho Lo anywhere in South Vietnam, it was immediately recognized and appreciated. When Pham Duy broke his retirement as a performer and joined us, it ensured the great success of our concerts. He is known and loved throughout the land.

It will be noted that Vietnamese music is based on the pentatonic system, the five-note scale. There are different pentatonics used in the North, Central area, and South, and there is progressively more freedom from the scale as one moves South. What must be recognized is that the simple scale system, only five notes, permits the performer to make all kinds of additions to the melody with half-tones and quarter-tones. Particularly in the sad songs of the South, all kinds of grace notes and melismatic additions are present.

The most popular of traditional instruments in Vietnam is the Dan Tranh, or zither. This is an instrument similar to the Japanese Koto, and both have roots in China. The Dan Tranh is a favorite instrument for young ladies to learn, much as our great-great-great grandmother might have learned the virginals. Another typical instrument is the Dan Bau, or Monochord. This seems like an easy instrument, as it has only one string. Actually it is perhaps the most difficult in Vietnam, as it is played entirely in harmonics, and the performer must constantly alter the pressure on the string.

Western instruments are now making their appearance in Vietnamese music, among which the most popular is the guitar. There are even classical guitarists among Vietnamese students, and some sort of reconciliation between harmonic and melodic music will no doubt be gradually taking place. With this sort of outside influence coming into Vietnamese music, I think it is especially valuable to have this record appear. Bill Crofut and I want to thank Pham Duy once again for his cooperation.
CHINESE


FM602 CHINESE, Mandarin Primer. Self-taught Chinese by the sound method, prepared by Dr. Yuen Ren Chao. Annotated text and complete published Mandarin Primer (Harvard University Press). 6-10" 33-1/3 rpm longplay (with book).

FM590 - CHINESE OPERA SONGS; excerpts from Cantonese Music Drama, Classic and contemporary Chinese Opera, songs, instrumental pieces, recorded in Macao, Nang Wa Heng. Yeung Chol-hei, Ngoh San Sung Tan, Lo Yin Shiu Tung Shing, Chi Yan Ho Chi, Long Kwan Man, Lau Tiu Kwo, Yue Ko Yuen Chung, Chin Ching Man Lei, Shau See Yuen, Fong Nong Fan Kung, Samp-Sel Min, Yin Yen Yat Sin. Notes. 1-10" 33-1/3 rpm longplay.

FM628 THE RISE OF THE EAST CITY, A peking opera recorded in China; a complete classical Chinese opera - (Mandarin) sung in Chinese; Eng. synopsis and complete Eng. text. 1-10" 33-1/3 rpm longplay.

The following sections also include recorded material from India:

FM429 MUSIC OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, incl. folk song from South China.

FM595 MUSIC OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLES, Vol. 2 incl. instrumental selection played on "mu-kin" and "butterfly harp."

JAPAN

FM435 TRADITIONAL DANCES OF JAPAN; dance-songs and music recorded on location at Bon Festival; legends, Buddhist ritual chorus, animal stories and myths, in Okinawa City and various prefectures. Incl. Kasa Odori, Sumiyoshi Odori, Naguma Bushi Odori, Henshuu Sado Okura, Iwami Oni Kesa, Awa Odori, Chiru Odori, Morikusa Oiwa Dance. Recorded by Mary L. Evans. Notes. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay.

FM429 FOLK MUSIC OF JAPAN, recorded in Japan by Edward Norbeck. Fourteen examples of folk music recorded in Okinawa, Love song from Iland of Sado, classic poems and dances from Hariva and Satsum, festival music; spinning song; excerpts from Shiriaki Ori, Bon Dance, Religious music (Kagura) related to the OD Dance, ballads and dancing songs, Bon and Wakka - work songs from villages on the Inland Sea. Notes. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay.

FM449 JAPANESE BUDDHIST RITUAL; recordings of the Tendai Sect, from the Nonomi Temple at Lawasaka, Memorial Services, a Shinto Cult. Detailed notes by Douglas Martin. 1-12" 33-1/3 rpm longplay.

LITHU IN U.S.A.