ELLIE MAO: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHINESE FOLK SONGS
ACCOMPANIED BY ANNA MI LEE / FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 887
ELLIE MAO
Sings
CHINESE
FOLK SONGS

CHINESE FOLK SONGS
R. T. Mok

Chinese folk songs are essentially vernacular music. They are sung in local dialects; and the very style of the music and the melodic structure of the songs in a given region are directly influenced by the phonetics of its dialect. For instance, the tendency to rise in pitch in the Szechuan dialect is known to be an important contributing factor in creating the "Kao Ch'iao" (the high vocal style) school of singing, and the characteristic "drop" of the melody line in the folk songs of Yunnan is probably influenced by the dialect of that province. Vernacularism in Chinese folk songs limits the folk singer to singing the songs of his own region, for if he attempts to sing the songs of other regions, not only will he be plagued by the different dialects, but he will also find it difficult to encompass the many ranges used in other types of folk songs without the technical facility of the trained singer.

In the present album, which introduces the folk songs of a great number of regions of China, some compromises would have to be made. Firstly, a single singer with a "trained" voice is to present these songs. This is a departure from the native style of singing which is usually done in a high falsetto, somewhat nasal and straight in quality. Secondly, the songs are sung in standard Chinese (and in some local dialects where possible), since for the reason mentioned earlier, this is the only way to cover as much ground as possible. While some local flavor is inevitably lost, the words can be understood by many people who know standard Chinese. The story element, important to all folk songs, is thus preserved. Thirdly, the folk songs are given a setting in the form of piano accompaniment.

Many songs contained in this album appeared in various collections without accompaniments and very likely, they have never been "publicly" performed since not until recent years were there "professional" folk singers as such in China. These songs are passed from generation to generation by word of mouth and are sung in the field, in the village festival or in the courtyard of the farm house. No change has been made to the original tunes or to the texts of the songs in their arrangements and careful attention is given to preserving the authenticity of the music. Within these limits then, the singer in the present album represents a ceratine degree of freedom in the interpretation of the songs, always relying on her knowledge and understanding of the styles of Chinese folk music.

Unlike the accompaniment to a European or American folk song which often has harmonic implications, the accompaniment to a Chinese folk song, wherever there is one, is likely to be that of a two-string fiddle (Hu Chin) or a bamboo flute extemporizing on the tune or playing in unison with the singing. Or the accompaniment may be only percussion, which harks back to the ancient tradition of Chi Chieh or Ku Peng - striking some kind of instrument or utensil to keep time in singing - methods which were variously described in ancient Chinese history. Instrumental accompaniments heard with the songs are mostly later addition, so that the songs become, in a sense, arrangements.

The use of the piano to accompany Chinese folk songs is also a compromise but no more than, say, the compromise made by composers like Ravel, Villa-Lobos or Britten in their excellent arrangements of folk songs. The piano accompaniments to the songs in this album were made by people familiar with the idiom of Chinese folk music. In "Wu Ke Tends the Sheep", the delicate effects of the Yang Chin (an instrument of the dulcimer variety) cannot be duplicated on the piano, but the poignancy of the piano accompaniment to the "Male Driver's Song" complements the earthy quality of the song perhaps better than the Chinese instrumental accompaniment written for it. Being a percussive instrument, the piano can be used successfully to simulate the effects of Chinese percussion in providing rhythmic support to a song. Simple or elaborate, the piano accompaniment aims at bringing out the qualities of a song and should not, it is hoped, distract the listener's attention from the song itself.

The differences in temperment of the people are reflected in the styles of Chinese folk songs. The wistfulness of the love songs of Yulin contrasts sharply with the uninhibited abandon of the Yunnan songs, in which the women boldly tease the opposite sex. The gentle step-wise progression of the songs of the people living on the rich plains of central and southern China differs from the irregular leaps and strong rhythm that characterize the songs of some regions in the North - songs that are sung by people who lead a more rugged life. The songs of the border provinces, mostly in North-West China, show strong traces of the music of the Turkestan. These "foreign" influences should not surprise the listener since for more than two thousand years, China had absorbed the foreign influences that came through these border regions. Some of the songs in this album deserve attention in their use of a form, among others, called the "Sze Chu Tou" - a four-phrase melody. Perhaps "Sze", or four, is symbolic of the four seasons and, as a factor of twelve, of the twelve months of the year. Indeed, many Chinese folk songs are about the four seasons and the twelve months, the same tune recurring over and again.

Chinese folk songs are highly modal - each of the five "loci" of the pentatonic scale serves as the tonic in a given mode. Several varieties of the seven-tone scale, with and without the raised fourth, are also used, including a scale resembling the melodic minor used in the music of some minority peoples in China. However, the fourths and the sevenths are often treated as passing tones, used in descending steps rather than as leading tones. The tendency to modulate from one mode to the other is sometimes quite strong as in the case of "The Washerwoman", a Szechuan Province folk song in this album.
China, with its vast and multi-racial population, is rich in folk music. It is, however, only recently that the music of the people has come to the fore because of the serious attention and study given to it, without which many of the lovely songs in this album would have remained unknown. The present album includes the songs of several important folk song regions in China - love songs, street songs, play songs and songs for children. In the first group are songs of the Han people, the majority race of China. Several songs under the heading of "Songs of the minority peoples" are songs that originally came from the Uighurs and the Khazaks who live in Sinkiang. A group of traditional folk songs of undetermined origins concludes the program. The prevailing mood in the selections made here is a happy one. There is joy but no excess, sadness but no despair. Indeed, the extremity of feelings that borders on the unhealthy is conspicuously absent in Chinese folk songs. Rather, the humour and wit, the joy in living, the cheerful acceptance of their hard lot, and the determination to improve it are clearly reflected in the songs of these sturdy people. The reason for presenting these songs, apart from their ethnic and musical interest, is the hope that these expressions of feeling characteristic of the Chinese people will be appreciated by other peoples of the world: for the feelings in these songs are so readily conveyed that they transcend any barrier of language or dialect.

Biographical notes

ELLIE MAO was born in China where she received her early musical training. In this country, she has studied in the Juilliard School of Music and Teachers College of Columbia University where she received the degree of M.A. She has been a pupil of Emma Zador of New York City. Miss Mao has spent a number of years in Vienna where she studied German songs and operatic roles. An experienced concert singer, she has given recitals in many parts of the world. Miss Mao has done intensive research in Chinese folk songs and has sung them in concert and on the radio.

NOTES ON THE SONGS

Songs of the Han people. The Han are the majority people of China. The following selections represent several important folk song regions of the country. Although the songs of some border regions come under the influence of the music of the peoples of other ethnic origins, they retain the characteristics of music of the Han people and are sung in Chinese.

The sweeping wind (Kanshu) - Arranged by Wang Yeh-fu

The words in this song appear to have nothing to do with its title, "Kwa Ti Feng" (The sweeping wind), which happens also to be the title of a small musical form in which the music itself is lively and breezy. The song repeats itself twelve times for the months of the year. Here it is sung four times to describe the rural activities of the four seasons.

In a far-away place (Tsing Hai) - Arranged by Mao Tsung-Chieh

A love song to a pretty herdsmaid on the pastureland of Tsing Hai.

The funny old man (Tsing Hai) - Arranged by Kiang Ting-Hsien

A humorous song poking fun at an old man, who at four-score and one tries to keep young by resorting to all kinds of antics, winding up quite tipsy in the wine shop.
Heartache (Ho Tao region of Inner Mongolia) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

"Please pass the word, the one I love that for three days and nights I have not eaten or slept - completely dazed just thinking of her."

A festive song (Ho Tao region of Inner Mongolia) - Arranged by William Moy

Sung on Chinese New Year's day. People visit each other to exchange greetings in a gay and festive atmosphere. This song is characterized by irregular leaps in the melody and a strong rhythm.

The embroidered purse (Shansi) - Arranged by Haieh Kung-Cheng

The girl sends her absent lover a purse on which she has embroidered a pair of lovebirds, with the wish that he will soon return to her.

Digging potatoes (Shansi) - Arranged by William Moy

A light-hearted song about digging potatoes.

Wu-Ke tends the sheep (Yulin-Shensi) - Arranged by William Moy

A Yulin ballad. The story tells of the hopeless love of a landowner's daughter for a hired hand. She thinks of him watching the flock, drenched in the summer rain or braving the elements on a stormy winter night and she would like to give him her little cotton jacket to keep him warm. She dreams that some day they can build a love nest together.

Hanging red lanterns (Yulin-Shensi) - Arranged by William Moy

A gay song of the type which sings of the seasons. The girl waits impatiently for the festive time of the year, when she can hang up the red lanterns and decorate her house to receive her betrothed.

The songs of Yulin have a distinctive character recognizable by the use of certain wide-spaced compound intervals and slurring of the melody. They are invariably love songs sung by women and have a captivating wistfulness about them. The particular style of singing and the highly integrated accompaniment played on the Yang Chin (instrument of the dulcimer variety) are best exemplified by the noted folk singer Chu Hsiu-fang and her teacher Ting Hsi-Tsai.

Lo-ho-ho (Chekiang) - Arranged by Li Ying-Hai

Lo-ho-ho is the refrain of this folk song which says: "The young one sings it and his heart is gladdened; the old one who sings it will feel young; the lovers who sing it will get married."

The nine-ring puzzle (Hupei) - Arranged by Kiang Ting-Hsien

"My love sends me a nine-ring puzzle. In vain I try to pull it apart with my dainty fingers, and with a sharp-edged knife. So be our love like a nine-ring puzzle." An example of the highly modulatory character of a short Chinese folk melody.

Clear is the river (Hupei) - Arranged by William Moy

A fishing song. Pulling at the net, the girl sings a lilting tune while the man plies the oars.

Kite-flying (Hunan) - Arranged by Kiang Ting-Hsien

A song about the favorite Chinese pastime of kite-flying. The rattles, bells and whistles attached to the kites produce a merry cacophony in the brisk wind.

When the gardenias bloom (Szechuan) - Arrange by Wu Yi-Li

"Against the wall, the gardenias are planted. My elder sister plucks one to wear in her hair and my younger sister puts another in her bosom. Pluck no more, sisters, for there are too few flowers for all to have one. Wait 'til next spring then - when the gardenias bloom again, I'll gather the flowers and bring them to you."

Bean sprouts, scallions and garlic cloves (Szechuan) - Arranged by Yang Shieh-Ho

A little "nonsense" song. The young farmer flirts with the peasant girl who drops by the vegetable farm.

The washerwoman (Szechuan) - Arranged by Wang Ke-San

Bright and early, the washerwoman does her washing in the brook. Her young man busily fetches water on the other side. "Look, who goes there?" "How are you doing?"

The melody of this short song shows a strong tendency to shift in mode and although it begins in the fifth mode of the pentatonic scale, it ends abruptly on the tonic of the first mode.

The songs of Szechuan are noted for their lyricism and humor, for the Szechuanese are a very expressive people. The above three songs are sung in the local dialect.

My love is like a dragon in the sky (Yunnan) - Arranged by Liu Jui-Ming

"My love is like a dragon in the sky and I, a little flower on earth. Rain will not fall unless the dragon raises a storm, and flowers will not bloom without rain." "A slender locust tree stands on yonder hill. With my hand on its bough, I yearn..."
for my love's return. If mother should wonder what I am waiting for, I'll ask: "When will the locust flowers bloom?"

The mule driver's song (Yunnan) - Arranged by William Moy

The girl mule driver tells the plough boy not to waste his time ploughing the stony field. Likewise, she sings, a girl should not marry a lazy husband, for an industrious man is rewarded by his hard work and is like an evergreen tree, ever growing and strong!

A guessing song (Yunnan) - Arranged by Kiang Ting-Hsien

A play song for children. The singer makes a number of puns about things which are good to eat and familiar objects.

Riding up the hill (Hai Kang) - Arranged by Kiang Ting-Hsien

The rider surveys the little hamlet from the top of the hill and wishes the lovers' sweet dreams as the new moon keeps her vigil from above.

Songs of the minority peoples. The provinces of Tsing Hai and Sinkiang lie in the westernmost border of China and for many centuries used to be the region where "western" influences passed into China. The music of this region was so well liked in the Tang dynasty that a special department for this music, called "Chiu Tze Yueh", was set up at the Court. More recently, this region has been the scene of busy traffic and trades where the Han people mingled freely with the peoples of other races. This intermingling of the races has had its effects on the folk music, which shows the influences of many different cultures. Various kinds of scale system are used, but a scale resembling the melodic minor, possibly a variant of the old "Yen Yueh scale" seems to be favored. The songs of two minority peoples - the Uighurs and the Kazaks - are presented here. The texts of the songs have been translated into Chinese.

The little birds (Tsing Hai - Uighur folk song) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

A dance-song sung by a group of children bidding farewell to the birds winging their way homewards in the south.

Song of the wagon driver (Sinkiang - Uighur folk song) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

A brash young fellow sitting on his wagon calls out to the girl: "Say, lovely one, if you think of marrying, choose no one but me. Load my wagon with your million-dollar dowry and bring along your little sister too!"

The little swallow (Sinkiang - Khazak folk song) - Arranged by Wu Chu-Chiang

A love song sung to a young Khazak girl, who is compared to a little swallow.

Majira (Sinkiang - Khazak folk song) - Arranged by Ting Shan-Teh

Majira is the name of a pretty girl who claims to sing most beautifully in her region. She challenges every young Khazak who admires her to outdo her in singing.

Traditional songs. What are called traditional songs are songs that have been popularly sung for generations, many of which are of undetermined origin. A song often has many versions and different texts - from the very prosaic to the highly literary - which are set to the same tune. Nevertheless, the folk element is recognizable in some of the musical forms used, namely the forms of "Dao Tsing", "Sze Chu Tou" and the "Flower drum". "Dao Tsing" is the chanting of a story accompanied by clappers or a long bamboo drum. The chanter evokes the mood of his story, often with a moral, in a rather slow tempo. Folk songs in this form are mostly slow and expressive. "Sze Chu Tou" is a song-form which consists of a four-phrase melody. A "flower drum" song is a gay and playful song. In the old days, street-singers used to sing it when begging for alms.

The happy fisherman (traditional) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

A song in the "Dao Tsing" form which describes the happy lot of the fisherman and his freedom from worldly cares.

The little cabbage (traditional) - Arranged by William Moy

A typical "Sze Chu Tou". It is about a little motherless girl; she secretly fears that her father will take another wife who will be unkind to her. She compares herself to a poor little cabbage that is left to grow alone and uncared for.

The bamboo flute (traditional) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

This is a children's song, sometimes sung as a play song, in a brisk tempo, or as a lullaby, in a slow tempo.

Flower drum song (traditional) - Arranged by Wong Wing-Hee

A humorous dialogue between two street-singers teasing each other. Wife: "Other women's husbands know their way around the Emperor's court but my miserable husband only knows how to bang a drum all day long. Man: "Other men's wives know how to embroider beautiful things, but my old woman is blessed only with a pair of big and ugly feet." The refrain "Ter-ehr-ling-taeh-p'iao" imitates the sound of the small cymbals accompanying such street-singing.

Notes by R. T. Mok

Acknowledgement is given to the arrangers of the songs contained in this album, especially to Messrs William Moy and Wong Wing-Hee with whom the singer has personally co-operated in making the arrangements of a number of songs.
歌  詞

漢族民歌

一  括地風(甘肅)  王也夫編曲
三月裡來三清明呀桃花不開杏花紅哪嘿嘿呀嘿嘿！
蜜蜂兒飛去你就忙做工呀哪哈依呀嘿！
七月裡來七月七呀天上牛郎配織女
織女嘅本是你牛郎的妻呀
九月裡來九重陽呀黃菊花兒開路旁呀
有心腸採來你就無心腸戴呀
十二月裡來一年滿哪胭脂銀粉都辦全
打打呀扮扮呀過新年呀

二  草原情歌(青海)  毛宗傑編曲
在那遙遠的地方有一個好姑娘人們經過了她的帳房；
都要回頭留戀的張望
她那粉紅的笑臉好像紅太陽她那美麗的動人的眼睛
好像晚上明媚的月亮
我願做一隻小羊跟在她身旁我願她拿着細細的皮鞭
不斷輕輕打在我的身上

三  尾老漢(青海)  江定仙編曲
一個推尾老漢喲喲七十七來嘞喲喲再加上四歲著葉
子兒青，八十一來嘞喲喲
像他上個星期叫喚口， Gives you a couple of 唛喚他喚來，
黃子見青怎麼樣地吹著風喲，
三十五天的白爾啞啞吹來青雨著怎麼樣地吹來著
黃子見青怎麼樣地吹著風喲，
四十天的白爾啞啞吹來青雨著怎麼樣地吹來著
黃子見青怎麼樣地吹著風喲，
五十天的白爾啞啞吹來青雨著怎麼樣地吹來著
八仙的個子上喚喚吹來青雨著怎麼樣地吹來著
黃子見青怎麼樣地吹著風喲，

四月不雨(內蒙河南) 黄永雄编曲

你把他小拉親親拍上一句話你就說，
“三天三夜没吃没喝不說不道不言不语请问黃子見青，
但想他喲喲喲喲，

五月不雨(內蒙河南) 黄永雄编曲

過了一個大年頭，三天我與你那成哥來拜年，
一進門把腰陣左手拉着右手撿那個你是喲喲喲，
見妹妹綁紮起個什麼年嘅舞喲，

六月不雨(山西) 謝劍生编曲

初一到十五，十五的月光高，風風雨雨吹起蘑菇揚，
三月的風雨雷電在鳥陣裏，我們同一個荷包菜，

一時一時來到山坡上面的意思情節你去猜，
二時二時豪雨在河邊你依依我靠您永遠不會開，

到山際(山西) 黄永雄编曲

兵營的個個女喚得滿滿地跳來起了那個鏟子吔啲啲心
來把洋芋剝一個個那個下去翻過來翻過去喲個麼
大的個兒喲啲啲你說妙不妙，

八月不雨(陝西-榆林) 黄永雄编曲

正月裡二月正月，正月十五掛上紅燈紅燈掛在吹火門外，
正月的月見青，哥他上工來喚喚呀喲。

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