

**MEMORY OF THE WORLD INTERNATIONAL REGISTER  
NOMINATION FORM**

**People's Republic of China - Chinese Traditional Music Sound Archive**

PART A - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**Abstract:**

This is the most comprehensive Collection of Chinese traditional music. It represents memories of traditional music and folk music of more than 50 nationalities.

**1. Identity and Location:**

*Name of the Documentary Heritage:* Chinese Traditional Music Sound Archive

*Country:* People's Republic of China

*State, Province or Region:* Beijing

*Address:* Research Institute of Music, Dong Zhi Men Wai, Xin Yuan Li, West Bldg. No.1 - Beijing,100027 China  
*Fax:* 86 10 6467 4416

*Name of Institution:* Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts

**2. Legal information:**

**Owner:** Music Research Institute of Music of Chinese Academy of Arts

**Custodian:** Qiao Jianzhong (Director of Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts)

**Legal Status:**

- *Category of ownership:* State property
  
- *Details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage:* Law of Chinese traditional folk art is still in process of formulating. The traditional music sound archive collected in the Music Research Institute were made 45 years ago, some made recently. Although they were played of sang by folk musicians, the archive's property should belong to the Music Research Institute.
  
- *Responsible administration:* The Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts is an institution of the State rank. Since 1950 when its predecessor, the National Music Research Institute of the Central Conservatory of Music was established, the Institute has been devoting itself to the task of collecting, recording, storing and classifying Chinese music data. Since 1956, the Institute founded the sound archive section and collected sound materials more consciously from the angle of preserving traditional sound archive. These materials became part of the reference room of the library, and was storage together with books, photographs and instruments. Over the past 40 years, experts of different age groups from the Institute had conducted field investigations in almost all provinces and autonomous regions of the country, covering more than 50 nationalities' traditional music. The Music Research Institute has been generally acknowledged as the reference center of Chinese traditional music, because of the richness and valuation of its storage of Chinese ancient musical scores, manuscripts, instruments, photographs and sound materials in the reference library: The library has 140,000 books; over 100 kinds of journals; 22,000 photos & pictures; 37602 discs; 8,000 recording tapes; 1,800 ancient & folk musical instruments. The most treasury and proudful storage in the library are the 7000 hours' musical recordings (see the catalogue book). These recordings were collected one by one and accumulated by several generations of Chinese musicians who collected for more than half a century and traveled over most parts of the country under poor conditions. Now, the folk singers & players who sang and played the beautiful music are mostly died, even the musician's who made the recordings are mostly not survived. This is why when we respect our predecessors, we have a deep sense of responsibility to preserve these audio materials. Since the musical heritage in China was mainly transmitted orally, audio materials became more important. The recordings reflects folk singers or players' artistic efforts, and also shows the artistic achievements of his/her master or even masters of several generations before. So, these memories are not only memories of the century but also memories of centuries, or memories of Chinese music history.

**3. Identification:**

**Description:** Sound archive of about 7,000 hours. It is the biggest, the most comprehensive and the most completed collection of Chinese traditional music and Chinese folk music in China.(covers traditional music and folk music of more than 50 nationalities)

**Bibliographic details:** Please see the book : "Catalogue of Chinese Music Sound Archive Collected in the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts", published by the Shandong Friendship Press, 1994. 647 pages. Here we offer a translation of only the classified index and the approximate amount of program items in the catalogue book as follow.

Catalogue of Chinese Music Sound Archives Preserved in the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts (only the classified index and approximate amount of programs items):

1. Ancient Songs (approximate 210 pieces)
2. Folk Songs (including songs of the Han nationality and the minorities) (approximate 10,080)
3. Qu Yi (musical story tellings) (approximate 756)
4. Local Opera (approximate 672)
5. Comprehensive Traditional Musical Types (musical types of vocal, instrumental and dance music performed by non-professional groups of inherited relations with steady forms; makes great influence to certain regions; has a long history) (approximate 378)
6. Religious Music (approximate 336)
7. Song and Dance Music; Dance Music (traditional and modern) (approximate 504)
8. Traditional Instrumental Music (solo, ensemble, unison, newly composed and arrangements) (approximate 132)
9. Modern Composed Songs (approximate 118)
10. Chinese Music Played on Western Instruments (approximate 609)
11. Operas, Ballets (approximate 63)
12. Other Sound Materials Related to Music (speeches, lectures, discussions, peddling, instruments' introducing) (approximate 42)

**Visual documentation:** We handed in, instead of visual documentation, a sample of our sound archive (20 minute's cassette tape) to Mr. Abid earlier in 1996.

#### History:

Sources of the sound archive:

a: Field work recordings all over the country made by scholars of the Institute during the past 46 years since 1950-1996.

b: Folk musicians from different provinces and different nationalities invited to the Institute to make recordings when they came to Beijing.

c: Gifts from different institutions or persons.

d: Others, for instance, sound materials re-recorded or bought from local broadcast stations or TV stations.

2) Storage environment: On Bottom of a building of 4 floors, the room is in approximately 150 square meters, with 6 glass windows facing the northwest, there are 3 entrances without doors. The range of temperature during the year is between 10 C-30 C. No humidity record has been made. All of the recordings are kept in cabinets with 6 layers, putting around 40 recordings on each layer. The discs are kept in wooden cabinets with drawers, putting 10 records in each drawer. The storing places were changed three times as follows: Beijing western suburbs (1954-1966); Qianhai Xi Jie No.17, in Beijing city (1966-1973); Dong Zhi Men Wai, Xin Yuan Li West Bldg. No.1 near the city in Beijing (1973-present)

3) Carrier and Present Situation: During Oct. 30-Nov. 11, 1996, Dr. Dietrich Schuller, Director of Phonogrammarchiv of Austrian Academy of Sciences came to the Music Research Institute on the mission of the UNESCO to investigate the sound archive of the Institute. We are taking the liberty of using his appraisal of the situation and degree of dangerous as follows:

Type of Tapes Endangered? Amount of the Tapes

- AGFA WOLFEN C AC SP brittleness 85
- CH LP high brittleness 827
- SCOTCH 111 & others AC brittleness 118

#### OLD CHINESE TAPE

- until about 1965 AC brittleness 63
- BASF LGS PVC SP no 525
- BASF DP26 PVC DP highly! Hydrolysis of pigment, oxide flakes off! 726
- «Parrot» PE LP good(?) 80

#### MODERN CHINESE

- «SHANGHAI» (red back) PE SP no 1308
- «HAIYOU» PE SP yes, looses oxide from tape edges 98
- «LIAN HUAN AT20» PE SP yes, looses oxide from tape edges 365
- Compact Cassettes 800
- Discs (Shellacs, commercial 78s) dust 24,000
- Vinyl discs dust 600
- Wires unknown 80

(notes):

SP=Standard Play=thick tape (53mm)

LP=Long Play= thinner tape (35mm)

DP=Double Play= thinnest tape (26mm)

**Bibliography:** Please see "Bibliographic details"

#### 4. Management plan:

1) This preservation strategy will be based on the report of Dr. Dietrich Schuller on his recent UNESCO mission to the Institute. It is intended to develop this strategy further by regular re-assessments during its future implementation. We will establish a special group with the director of the Institute, the Librarian, technicians and administrative personnel as basic members, to promote the safeguard, recording and preservation of the sound archive.

2) According to Dr. Schuller's suggestion, the storage environment of the sound archive is in need of improvement. An environment that relied on natural temperature and natural humidity could not suit the requirement of keeping the materials for long. The room should be changed for constant temperature and constant humidity. At the moment, we can seal up the windows, or even build a wall in front of the windows, to protect the archive from sunshine, wind, dust and other danger.

3) Among the materials, some discs have lasted around 70 years, most materials have generally lasted 30-40 years. Caused by different sources, different qualities, many are now brittle, some tapes' oxide flakes off, some are in bad shape, and the tapes that were wet before making recordings are in emergency to preserve.

4) Meanwhile, the Music Research Institute is in lack of equipments, some machines are under the general international standard. In order to make re-recordings, the Music Research Institute is in need of 1-2 machines in higher standard attached with testing systems.

5) According to Dr. Schuller's suggestion, it is necessary for each item of the collection to be re-recorded on different types of carriers (DAT, CDR, BASF) and they should be placed in two different places to guard against all accidents.

6) Seek for opportunities for technicians to go abroad for further training of a short period of time.

7) In order to let the world get to know Chinese music and strengthen the international exchange and cooperation, at the same time as making re-recordings of the sound archive, the Music Research Institute plans to make a set of CD series of high quality that reflects the whole scenery of Chinese music. This series may include 20-30 CD in total. (we have edited such a kind of sound materials, but we did not publish them. We may need financial support for this project from the UNESCO.

8) Two brotherly institutions-- the Local Opera Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts, and the Reference Library of the Chinese Academy of Arts have storage of sound materials of Chinese local opera that are also in emergency to preserve. If we are permitted to be registered in «The Memory of the World» program, we are willing to cooperate with them and take them as part of our preservation plan.

## 5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria:

The most special sound materials of the Music Research Institute are as follows: folk songs and dances of Tibet--the roof of the world, recorded in 1960 (over 30 hours); The whole set of the «Twelve Makam» music and other folk songs of the Ugar nationality as well as the Kazak nationality recorded in 1963; many Daoist music recorded by Yang Yinliu, the first director of the Music Research Institute in 1950 at Wuxi, Jiangsu province, including the «Moon Mirrored in the Spring Fountain» played by the folk musician Ah Bing himself (this piece has become the most famous and popular piece in China); 40 hours' of different types of folk music recorded at 1956 during the big general investigation conducted by the Music Research Institute in Hunan province; Religious music played by the Beijing Zhi Hua Temple at 1952; Several hundred hours' of Qin music played by famous Qin players from over 20 cities in 1950s recorded by the Music Research Institute; Folk music of the Miao nationality, the Dong nationality and the Yao nationality recorded from the Southwest provinces.

For people to fully comment these important historical sound archives, here we would like to pick out the most important parts and give an introduction in detail:

- XI'AN DRUM MUSIC: Xi'an, located at Northwestern China is famous by its terra-cotta warriors which archaeologists call «the eighth marvel in the world» In the past, Xi'an was capital of the most powerful dynasties such as the Qin, the Han and the Tang dynasties. A folk wind and drum musical type called "Xi'an Drum Music" was popular around the city's suburbs. According to the research by Chinese scholars, the repertoires played by the Xi'an Drum Music folk musical societies have preserved some of the musical styles of Tang dynasty. Different from general folk music that are transmitted orally, the Xi'an Drum Music has musical scores passed from generation to generation, and the way the scores are noted, are very similar to the Tang musical scores discovered in the Dun Huang Grotto, (hand copied in 933, now kept in Paris National Library and the Nara National Museum, Japan) and also similar to the scores transmitted by the poet Jiang Baishi (1155-1221) of Song dynasty. Since early 1950s, musicians from the Music Research Institute and Xi'an began to study this musical type by collecting hand copied musical scores, and making recordings of the playing and taking photographs. Yet limited by the technical utilities of the time, they were not able to make video tape recordings. Now, most of the old masters of the Xi'an Drum Music societies have passed away, so the recordings became very rare. For instance, one of the master An Laixu (1895-1976) was said to be such a good virtuoso for his high performing techniques and artistic expression, that none of his successors' playing could compare with him. Fortunately, we have his playing recordings in our library. Although researchers have noted and classified most of the recordings, these precious audio tape recordings have still not been published.

- THE ZHI HUA TEMPLE JING MUSIC: In the Zhi Hua Temple (founded in 1446), there are hand copied musical scores from as early as 1694. In 1953, when the musicians of the Music Research Institute visited this temple, the monks (according to the archives, they were the 27th generation of monks in the temple) played the Zhi Hua Temple Jing music for them and could chant all the musical scores. This proved that the music has been transmitting for at least 300 years of time. Since 1987, musicians from the Research Institute spent several years to make a general investigation around the Baoding area in Hebei province which is not far from Beijing. They discovered almost 80 kinds of hand copied scores similar to the Zhi Hua Temple Jing Music, and they recorded nearly 100 hours' recordings played by the folk masters.

While doing the project mentioned above, we were sponsored by the British-Sino Friendship Association and moreover, Mr. Stephen Jones, an English musicologist joined in our work. His research achievements is now published by the Oxford University Press. Although the sponsorship was not very big, it was helpful for our work in collecting and studying this folk musical type. This kind of cooperation provided a successful cooperative example between Chinese musicians and musicians around the world. We got to realize that like ourselves, musicians from other countries are also interested in Chinese traditional music.

- THE TWELVE MUKAM: In Xinjiang autonomous region, there is a popular musical type called the Twelve Mukam which includes sets of songs, dances and instrumental music. The Twelve Mukam recordings in the library of the Music Research Institute were collected by musicians as they drove on carriages and camels all along the "silk road". The

hardship which they experienced in 1950s was not better than what the cultural disseminators experienced on the silk road one thousand years ago. The music is now noted, but most of the scores have still not been published because of financial shortage, and the publishing of the recordings of course could not be considered. In 1994, the government of Xinjiang autonomous region managed to publish the recently collected Twelve Mukam, however, the most treasuring recordings that was made in the 1950s are still laying on the shelves.

- HE QIN MUSIC: The most respectable and also the most ancient Chinese instrument is the Qin. Scores which were printed in the ancient times were also mostly Qin scores. During the past decades, our government sponsored a big project to publish a "Great Collection of Qin Music" which is not completed, but 17 volumes are printed now. The ancient Qin heritage continuing until today, has produced a great amount of Qin players and Qin scholars. The theory of Chinese musical aesthetic has mostly come from the scholarship of the Qin. Musicologists says: among Chinese traditional music, there are only three big treasures that have musical scores survived, and the music is still living and practical and so could have audio materials to listen to: they are the Qin, the local musical types and the local opera's music. Among the three, the Qin music is the one which is mostly prominent, because ancient men of letters learnt four kinds of arts---the Qin, chess, book and painting, and they labeled the Qin on the top. Many scholars joined in the study of Qin knowledge, so its materials are rich, and whenever one studies Chinese music history, Qin scores would be the most reliable references. In the 1950s, the Music Research Institute began to make a general investigation on Qin scholars and began to record their Qin playing. The result was several hundred hours' of Qin recordings. These are the most valuable parts of the audio materials of Chinese traditional music. According to the process of modernization, the ancient Qin scholarship is beginning to vanish. Some old Qin scholars are passing away, and the audio materials they left behind became rare historic records.

- CHINESE LOCAL OPERAS: Chinese local operas that began to be matured since Song dynasty (960-1279) are among the greatest dramas' types in the world. There are more than 300 different kinds of local operas in China, and several thousand kinds of plays and musical scores printed in the ancient times have survived. Kun Qu is a kind of local opera which has the longest history, and Beijing opera which was prevailed in Qing dynasty and still popular today is called the Chinese national opera. These local operas are well received because of their interesting stories, and more important because their beautiful music melodies are artistically powerful and charm. Chinese people usually say "listen" to the local operas instead of saying "watching" it. This is because they sit in the theater to enjoy how different artists of different styles perform and deal with the melodies of a same opera. The Music Research Institute's library has a great collection of local opera's music, and most of them are different local opera's representative performer's melodies.

- FOLK SONG: Let us take one kind of folk song---the HUA ER---for example. Hua Er is popular in the West part of China which covers provinces like Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and other places, and the Hua Er is sung by different ethnic groups of people, such as the Han, the Huizu, the Salar, the Bunan, the Dongxiang, Tibetan and the Yugur. Every year in spring, more than 10 thousand singers of the ethnic groups and millions of people come to gather at big grounds to compete in singing the Hua Er. This would be a big event. A famous singer Zhu Zhonglu always kept crowds of people around him wherever he went. The Music Research Institute recorded most of the folk songs he sang, and invited him to the institute to make recordings using professional equipment. These recordings are also treasures of Chinese folk songs.

Concerning these treasures of historical sound materials, we suppose there are at least the following points necessary to draw attention to:

- **The value:** This sound archive is the richest and most comprehensive collection in China ,and of course , in the world with regard to Chinese traditional music.
- **The amount:** This huge collection of sound archive is the largest one in China. They are the only sound «museum» that could completely reflect the heritage of Chinese traditional music.
- **The sources:** The main body of this sound archive is a result of an acoustic field work conducted in the country around the biggest area and lasted for the longest period of time It is collected by Chinese scholars for half a century from all over the country.
- **Situation:** These treasures exist here, even during the great disaster of the «Cultural Revolution», they survived under brave prevention of our staff members. However, these sound materials collected in the 50s & 60s are beginning to vanish by the changing cultural background and cultural ecology caused by the tremendous political and economical change. If China loose them, the world would loose them, and they will be lost for ever.
- **Uniqueness:** Different from some sound materials in other institutions (for instance the Central People's Broadcast Station or the TV Station), the folk music among the sound archive are mostly recorded in the field, many are primitive records of folk rituals or folk religious rituals, not recordings of stage performances, so they have not been refined or polished, the original cultural features are truer and close to folk life.
- **Importance:** This is the oldest and the most complete collection of sound recordings related to Chinese traditional music, in other words, they are the most direct, the most comprehensive and most vigorous reference for people to study Chinese traditional music and Chinese folk music. No written records could compare with them.

## 6. Consultation:

In autumn 1993, Mr. Henri Lopes (Assistant director-General for culture of the UNESCO from Paris) came to visit the Music Research Institute. When director Qiao Jianzhong invited him to see the sound archives, he was very surprised and suggested Mr. Qiao to have attention from the UNESCO and ask them to concern about the preservation of these treasures. He asked how much would it cost to improve the basic environment for the preservation? Mr. Qiao guessed about 35,000 US dollars. From then on, the Music Research Institute got in contact with the Beijing's office of the UNESCO, through the foreign affair department of the Culture Ministry of China. And Mr. Moukala Ngouemo Edmond from the Beijing's office of the UNESCO often came in concern. In 1994-95, the Music Research Institute was in contact with the «Memory of the World» program, and applied for UNESCO's assistance in making re-recordings of 7000 hours'

sound materials. The application gave a budget of the equipment and tapes according to the market price in China at that time. Two experts (Mr. George Boston & Dr. Dietrich Schuller) invited by the UNESCO responded our application and made a budget of 75,000 US dollars. In June 1996, when the 1st International Conference of the «Memory of the World» held in Oslo, Norway, the Music research Institute sent Ms. Cai Liangyu to attend the meeting and gave a lecture under the title of «Preserving the Traditional Musical Heritage in China».

During Oct. 30 - Nov. 11, 1996, the UNESCO sent Dr. Dietrich Schuller, the director of Phonogrammarchiv of Austrian Academy of Sciences to Beijing, to investigate the sound archive of the Music Research Institute.

Before leaving Beijing, Dr. Schuller emphasized that: these invisible treasures have the same cultural importance as those visible ones, such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, people will be aware little by little, that we must preserve these sound archives of historical importance as we preserve the Great Wall.

**Independent institutions and experts:**

- Professors Huang Xiangpeng and Guo Naian. Both ethnomusicologists and experts in Chinese traditional music. Address: Music Research Institute , Dong Zhi Men Wai, Xin Yuan Li West Bldg. No.1 Beijing, 100027, China
- Dr. Dietrich Schuller, Director of Phonogrammarchiv of Austrian Academy of Sciences. Expert in acoustic science with strong educational background of ethnomusicology. Address: Liebiggasse 5 A-1010 Vienna 1., Austria FAX: + 431 403 0465

**7. Nominator:**

**Name:** International Division, Foreign Affair - Dept. of Culture Ministry of P.R. of China

**Relationship:** Leading body of Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts

**Contactperson:** Mr. Pu Tong

**Address:** West City, Dong An Bei Da Jie A83, Beijing, China  
Zip Code: 100722

also:

**Name:** China National Commission for UNESCO

**Relationship:** Leading body of Music Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts

**Contact Person:** Mr. Jing Feng

**Address:** West City, Da Mu Cang, Xi Dan, Mu Ban Hutong No.37, Beijing, China  
Zip Code: 100816