

Pipa -Ancient Musical Instrument

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The Pipa is a four-stringed Chinese musical instrument. The pipa appeared in China from the Qin Dynasty (221 - 206 BC), and became a favorite in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), when the society fervently embraced exotic art forms.

Throughout the ages, the instrument has become an indispensable part of traditional Chinese music.

The Pipa tunes have very diverse styles, and are traditionally classified as either Wen Qu (civil and mild tone) or Wu Qu (martial and fierce tone).

Masses of pipa-playing Buddhist semi-deities are depicted in the wall paintings of the Mogao Caves near Dunhuang. The instrument has a pear-shaped wooden body with a varying number of frets ranging from 12–26.

The Chinese names: "pí" (琶) and "pá" (拍), imply the two most common ways of playing this

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instrument. "Pí" is to push the fingers of the right hand from right to left, thus more than one finger can be used at a time striking multiple notes, and "pá" is to pull the thumb of the right hand from left to right, in the opposite direction.

Pipa had spread to many East and Southeast Asian countries centuries ago, but now the instrument and its' music are just surviving in the museums in Mainland China. Many top class Chinese musicians are now living overseas to continue developing Chinese music.

The pipa is referred to frequently in Tang Dynasty poetry, where it is often praised for its refinement and delicacy of tone.

"Pipa Xing" a poem by Bai Juyi, a famous ancient Chinese poet, describes a chance encounter with a female pipa player on the Yangtze River:

□□□□□□ : The bold strings rattled like splatters of sudden rain,
□□□□□□ : The fine strings hummed like lovers' whispers.
□□□□□□ : Chattering and pattering, pattering and chattering,
□□□□□□ : As pearls, large and small, on a jade plate fall.

Please enjoy world class Pipa player, Ms Yu Jia, a Beijing born artist who is the leading soloist in the Singapore Chinese orchestra, playing Chinese Yi Minority dance.

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM0JgDiWNd8>