

WU Wei

Sheng! Project – TPMC, Sorbonne Université, IRCAM
Chinesisches Musikzentrum Berlin

Creators & Disseminations of the 37s Sheng

Prof. WENG Zhenfa – Prof. MU Shanping – Prof. XU Chaoming

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- 2) Design Concept
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 - (b) Prof. XU Chaoming
 - (c) Prof. WENG Zhenfa
- 4) WU Wei's thanks to the professors

Development Of The 37s Sheng



HISTORY of the Sheng

- * 11th Century BC as »Sheng« in China
- * AD 710 to 794 as
 - »Sho« in Japan
 - »Saenghwang« in Korea
 - »Khaen« in Laos/ Vietnam/ Thailand

Development Of The 37s Sheng

Sho



Saenghwang



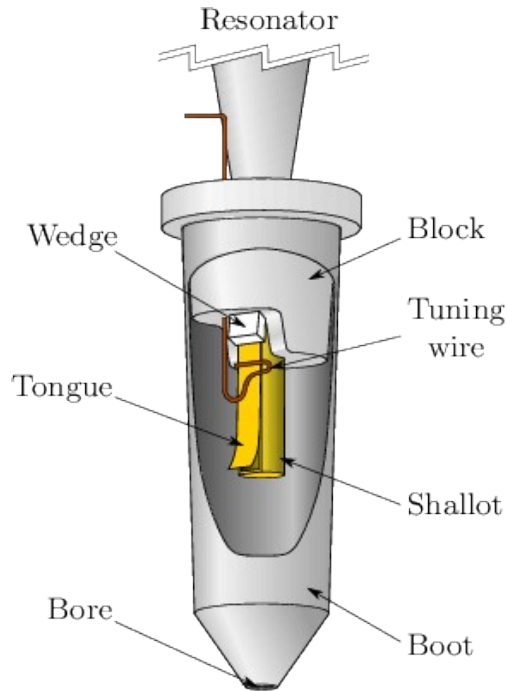
Khaen



Development Of The 37s Sheng

HISTORY in Western World

- 1750 free-reed principle exported to St. Petersburg (Russia)
- 1780 first free-reed instrument in Denmark
 - Accordion, Harmonium, Pump Organ, Melodeon, Reed Organ, Organ



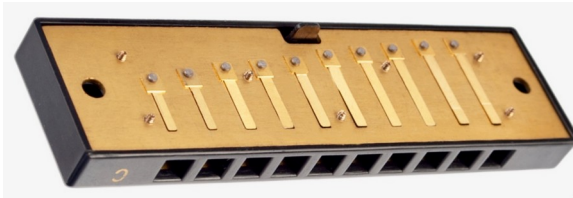
Development Of The 37s Sheng

Free-reeds in western instruments

The Sheng was the first Chinese instrument that influenced the western world.



Sheng



Harmonica



Pump Organ



Accordion

Design Concept

Collaboration of 3 top players



In 1985, after 5 years of experimentation, the door opened to a multi-dimensional language of future Sheng music.

Design Concept

Collaboration of 3 top players

1) Co-work of Prof. MU and Prof. WENG

- they spent 5 years of work on a modified Sheng at the Shanghai traditional instrument factory

2) Consultation with Prof. XU

- During the research process, they received important input from Prof. XU Chaoming

Development Of The 37s Sheng

1985 – Birth of the 37s Sheng

Parts:

- ✓ Free reeds
- ✓ Resonance tube
- ✓ Amplification tube
- ✓ Wind chest
- ✓ Mouthpiece



Left to right: XU Jinlong, MU Shanping, WENG Zhenfa, SHEN Yuqing

Development Of The 37s Sheng

Parts of the 37s Sheng

Free reeds



Development Of The 37s Sheng

Parts of the 37s Sheng

Resonance tube



Development Of The 37s Sheng

Parts of the 37s Sheng

Amplification tube



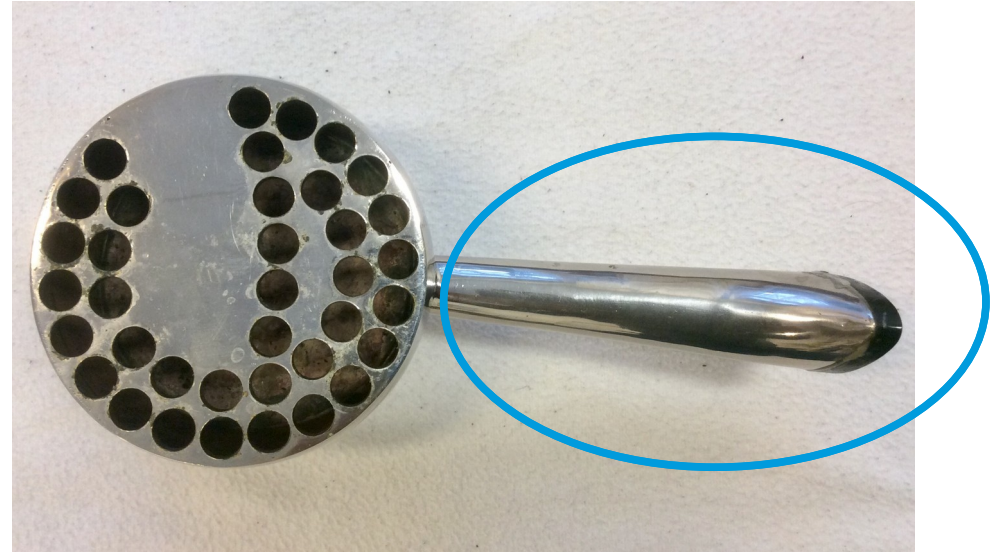
Development Of The 37s Sheng

Parts of the 37s Sheng

Wind chest



Mouthpiece



Design Concept

Why was the Sheng modified?

- the pentatonic scale was augmented by only a few diatonic scales
- transposition issue
 - × only limited notes on traditional Sheng
 - × Sheng player needs at least 4 Sheng in different keys to transpose music

C key Sheng: C, F

E key Sheng: E, A

D key Sheng: D, G

Eb key Sheng: Eb, Bb

Design Concept

Why was the Sheng modified?

- traditional Sheng could not be used for chromatic music
- Chinese harmony and a very limited selection of western harmony
- Pythagorean Tuning system
- Limited in collaboration with western instrument ensembles and orchestras

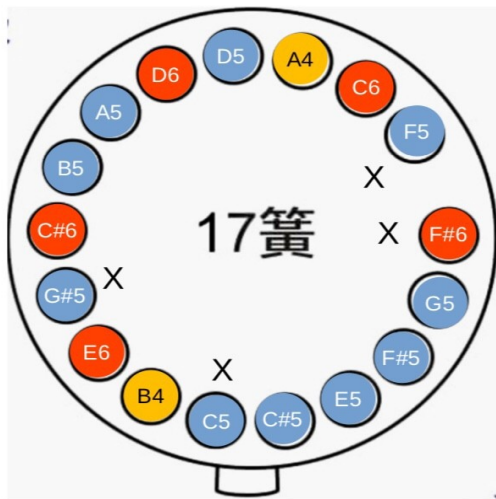
Design Concept

What is new?

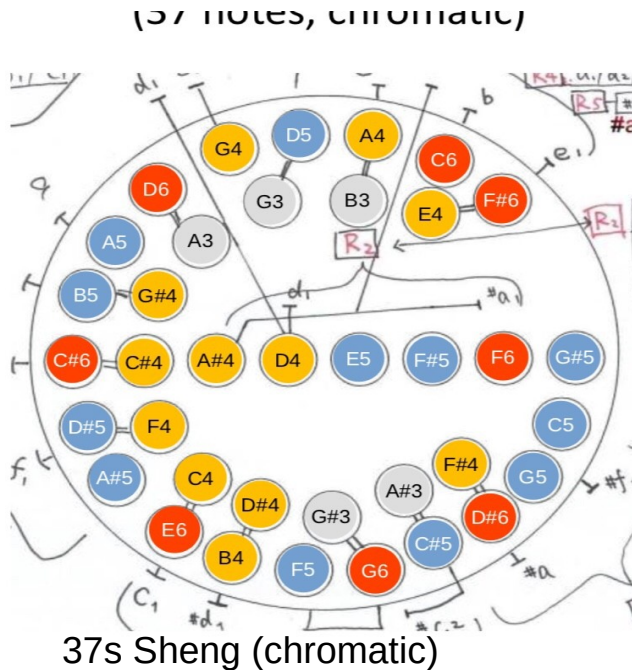
1) Position of the pipes

- Mainly “Hebei Fingering” of the traditional Sheng, only 4 notes changed

(F5 > C5, C5 > F#6,
F#6 > F5, G#5 > F#6
... marked with “X”)



17-pipe Sheng from Hebei



37s Sheng (chromatic)

Design Concept

What is new?

2) Position of the pipes

- easier to play chromatic scales
fingers in **right hand**
fingers in **left hand**
- pitch range from g3 to g6

G3	G#3	A3	A#3	B3	C4	C#4	D4	F#4	E4	F4	F#4	
4	1	4	1	3	1	3	2	1	3	1	1	
G4	G#4	A4	A#4	B4	C5	C#5	D5	D#5	E5	F5	F#5	
4	3	4	2	1	1	1	4	2	2	1	2	
G5	G#5	A5	A#5	B5	C6	C#6	D6	D#6	E6	F6	F#6	G6
1	2	3	1	2	3	2	4	1	1	2	3	1

Design Concept

What is new?

2) Position of the key and hole

- adapted to the organic alignment of the fingers
- Balancing the instrument on both hands



Left Hand



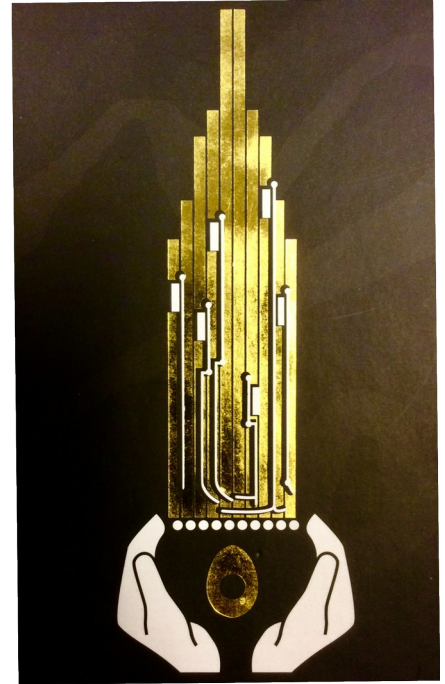
Right Hand

Design Concept

What is new?

3) Opposite Fingering

- chromatically successive notes are located opposite each other
- brings balance and stillness into the player's hands
- the player has more flexibility and freedom into the performance
- allows a maximum of combination of tones
- allows a very fluent and fast play
- body and Sheng can become one



Design Concept

What is new?

4) Amplification tube

- used on 13 bamboo pipes (G5 to G6)
- adapted on top selected pipes
- made out of bamboo (to match the traditional tonal aesthetic)



Design Concept

What is new?

5) Leverage keys

- Key mechanism with straight and angled levers
- using straight levers is direct and fastest



Design Concept

What is new?

6) Linkage keys

- Key mechanism with angled levers



Design Concept

What is new?

7) Folded tube

- to reduce the height of the Sheng and to keep it in a traditional shape
- double tube: combination of 2 tones/ pipes – the longer tube is bended, so that it can be attached to the shorter pipe

for example

C#4 (inside; with key)

+

C#5 (outside; with hole)



Design Concept

What is new?

8) Combination of Closed & Non-closed System

- saves air volume
- needs less air pressure for playing
- 17 pipes with keys, levers and cups
G3, G#3, A3, A#3, B3, C4, C#4, D4, D#4, E4, F4, F#4, G4, G#4, Bb4, Bb5, C#4
- The rest 20 pipes are open

Design Concept

Advantages of the new design

- preserving the traditional fingering skills
 - (1) Mu-Ying Glissando
 - (2) Li-Ying Acciaccatura of 4 notes
(A5 – B5 – C#6 – D6)
 - (3) Da-Ying striking a cluster slowly or fast

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. MU Shanping

- MU Style as a form of Shandong Style
- strong root of traditional music from Niuzi Opera
- developed special a combination of breathing, tonguing and finger techniques («The 3 Great Breaths») for the melody play



Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) »The 3 Great Breaths« | Tonguing-Breathing-Technique |
| (a) Dun Qi (»xue xü«) | chopping breath |
| (b) Ju Qi (»si sao«) | sawing breath |
| (c) Duo Qi (»se ki«) | soft staccato breath |
| 2) »She Chan« | Tongue Vibrato |
| 3) »Hou Chan« | Throat Vibrato |

Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

4) flexible musical ornaments

- combines tonguing, breathing & fingering techniques

5) MU harmony

- traditional harmony adds a pure 5th above the fundamental note
- adding a 4th below the fundamental note in upper register harmonies

Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

6) Two-Part & polyphonic Music

- Two-part: rhythmic accompanying voice in 2 forms: Legato & Li-Yin
- Main melody with a melodious accompanying pattern

Examples:

»Lotus Flower« by Prof. MU Nan

»Riding The Bamboo Horse«

»Wei Shan Lake Fisher Boat Song«

Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

6) Two-Part & polyphonic Music

- Rhythmic accompanying voice in 2 forms:
Legato & Li-Yin

»Lotus Flower«

Video/ Audio

Styles Of The Masters

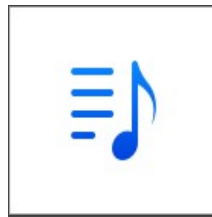
MU Style

6) Two-Part & polyphonic Music

- Main melody with a melodious accompanying pattern

»Riding The Bamboo Horse«

Video/ Audio



Styles Of The Masters

MU Style

6) Two-Part & polyphonic Music

- »Hanging Red Lantern«

Video/ Audio

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. MU – Composition List

- »Weishan Lake Boat Song«
- »Riding The Bamboo Horse«
- »Rose Blossom«
- »Cotton country Beauty«
- »Hanging Red Lantern«
- »Shandong Luo Luo Tune«
- »Weaving Fisher Net Song«
- »Lotus Flower«

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU Chao-Ming

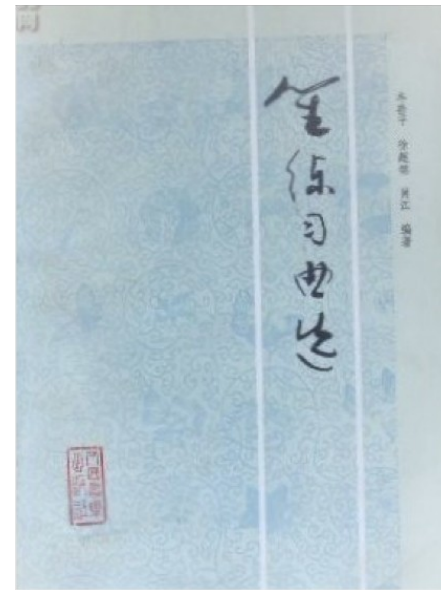
- Sheng virtuoso, educator, composer & theoretician



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU Chao-Ming

- Systematical teaching
 - »Selected Sheng Etudes«



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU - Research

- Published several papers of academic value
 - 1) "The Harmony and Combined Tones of the Sheng"
 - 2) "The Innovation of Sheng Playing Technique - The Challenge of Modern Sheng Music"
 - 3) "The Derivation of Traditional Harmony and the Development of Polyphony"and many more

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU - Compositions

1) Traditional Harmony

- sometimes Mix with Third, Sixth

2) Development of Polyphony

- Linka Yueye »»» Track
- Chaoyuan Ge »»» Track
- Song Cha »»» Track
- Chuiqilusheng Chang Fengshou »»» Video

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU - Compositions

2) Development of Polyphony

»Chaoyuan Ge«

谱例 12:

慢板

徐超铭改编 《朝元歌》

The image displays a musical score for 'Chaoyuan Ge' in 4/4 time, featuring two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff also uses a treble clef and the same key signature. The score illustrates polyphony through overlapping melodic lines and complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and sustained notes with ties.

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU – Developing contemporary music with composers

»Fugue« by CHEN Mingzhi

Track

远草赋
(笙独奏)

陈铭志 曲
徐超铭定指法

自由地

愉快 小快板

The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff is marked '自由地' (Ad libitum) and includes dynamics 'p' and 'pp'. The second staff is marked '愉快 小快板' (Allegretto) and includes dynamics 'mp' and 'mf'. The third staff includes dynamics 'p', 'mf', and 'pp'. Fingering notation 'y' and 'z' is used throughout to indicate specific fingerings for the instrument.

The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff includes dynamics 'p' and 'pp'. The second staff includes dynamics 'mf' and 'f'. The third staff includes dynamics 'p' and 'mf'. The fourth staff includes dynamics 'mf' and 'p'. Fingering notation 'y' and 'z' is used throughout to indicate specific fingerings for the instrument.

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU – Developing contemporary music with composers

»Calling The Phoenix«

by ZHAO Xiaosheng

Track

63 $\text{♩} = 120$
legato
mp
p

69
mp
p

73
p
cresc. *poco* *a* *poco*
stacc.

Detailed description: This block shows the first system of a musical score for piano. It consists of four staves. The first staff is the right hand, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a melodic line with a crescendo and a fortissimo (f) dynamic. The second and third staves are the left hand, starting with a bass clef. They feature a steady accompaniment with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and a piano (p) dynamic. The fourth staff continues the left hand accompaniment with dynamics including piano (p), crescendo (cresc.), poco, a, and poco, and includes a staccato marking.

77
f

82
f

86
f *p*

90

Detailed description: This block shows the second system of the musical score, continuing from measure 77. It consists of four staves. The first staff is the right hand, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a melodic line with a fortissimo (f) dynamic. The second and third staves are the left hand, starting with a bass clef. They feature a steady accompaniment with a fortissimo (f) dynamic and a piano (p) dynamic. The fourth staff continues the left hand accompaniment with a fortissimo (f) dynamic.

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Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU – Recording List

- »Silent Night Thoughts« by Xiao Jiang
- »Chinese Celebrities, Famous Songs Series« (one of them)
- »Chinese Sheng Xu Chao-Ming« on solo album CD in China and Paris, France.
- »Peter And The Wolf« (EMI Records)



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. XU – Work List

- Song Cha
- Linka Yueye
- Chui Qi Lusheng Chang FenShou
- Chao Yuan Ge
- LeYuan XiXi
- Gu Xiangxing
and more ...



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG Zhenfa

- aim of naturalness
- Breaking through limitations of traditional music in the concept of physical principles of respiration, sound and technical methods
- brought the performance of the Sheng to an unprecedented peak

»The Little Stream« [Track](#)



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG

Master Weng improved many of the techniques of the Sheng:

normal breathing technique by blowing and sucking, air panting, single tongue, double tongue, triple tongue, soft double tongue, beaten breath, staccato, sawing breath, chopping breath, tongue vibrator, air trembling, ...

and new techniques based on **The 3 Great Breaths** (the main breath-and-tongue-techniques of MU Style), different combinations of air and hand techniques, etc., forming the development and creation of new playing techniques of the Sheng. Those improvements express the musical texture better.

Audio Example: >>The Little Stream<<

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Teaching Philosophy

**Open mind to find and Pursue better ways to doing things whenever possible.
The use of “Qi” is the soul of wind music.**

>> in my opinion, any instrumental performance that has reached a certain level of sophistication is ultimately about “Qi”.

This is the essence of our long Chinese history. <<

(Weng Zhenfa)



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Teaching Philosophy

- Teaching is not just limited to the mastery of the instrument
- any instrument is only a medium for musical expression
- music itself is beyond instrumental music
- Encourages his students to broaden their horizons, to push the boundaries, to be creative and to find more possibilities to contribute to music and to the art of the Sheng

Audio Track

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Ancient Philosophy

- we are all so small in the boundless universe: we should live in harmony with heaven and earth
- same applies for music: only in harmony with each other can we achieve moving and pure music

Audio Track

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Musical Features

- 1) beautiful sound: natural, soft, explosive, tension etc.
- 2) Performance skills breakthroughs
 - (a) Fast finger movement »»» Audio Example
 - (b) Chord breakdown »»» Audio Track
 - (c) Two-part music »»» Audio Track

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Work list

1) Sheng Concerto

- Enjott Schneider -Veränderungen
- Zhang Xiaofeng: The Legend of Wangfu Yun
- Xiao Jiang: Silent Night Thoughts
- Enjott Schneider : Yi – concerto for sheng and Chinese Orchestra

2) Traditional Music

- Jin Tune
- Little River Flows
- Xiangjiang River Spring Song

- Chaoyuan Song
- A Golden Phoenix Flies from the Reservoir
- Drink a Cup of Victory"
- Gusu Xing
- Sending Tea
- Fengyang Song“ in Eight Versions
- Yimeng Mountain Song
- Rinka Moon Night
- Qin wang po zhenyue

Audio Track



Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Work list

3) Contemporary Music for Sheng

- Gehard Resch : Sheng concerto "River, Gram, Form" – premiere in 2005 with nieuw Ensemble, Netherlands
- Xu Shua: Sheng and String Quartet "In Nomine II"
- Enjott Schneider: „Veränderungen“

4) Film Music

- ... for over 100 films

- Animation »Indiscriminate«

滥竽充数 6: 50 -8: 50 (2 min)

- Animation »Love Of The Landscapes«

•

- „Love of the Landscape“ (山水情)

B.3:20-4:45 C.9:05-9.58 D.18:05

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Work list

3) **Contemporary Music for Sheng**

Xu Shua:
Sheng and String Quartet

"In Nomine II"

Part A

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Continued Research:

The development
of the
37s Sheng Series

- Alto Sheng
- Tenor Sheng
- Bass Sheng



Weng Zhenfa 37s Sheng Ensemble

Styles Of The Masters

Prof. WENG – Continued Research:

The development of the 37s Sheng Series

Vidoe:

1.

[Mozart](#)

-

2. Jing Diao

Styles Of The Masters



Wu Wei's thanks to his 3 mentors

My three mentors, Professor Weng Zhenfa, Professor Xu Chao-Ming and Professor Mu Shanping, have all reached the peak of their art in the field of sheng performance, teaching, theoretical research, composition, instrument development. They are highly respected in the profession and have made a great contribution to the development of the Chinese Sheng art. The production of the 37 reed sheng is the inevitable result of the ancient Chinese instrument, the sheng, coming to the world stage in the 21st century.

The artistic wealth they have created for the art of Chinese sheng is worth my life's energy to cherish, to learn, to experience, to interpret and to spread.



Styles Of The Masters

Wu Wei's thanks to his 3 mentors

Thank you
Prof. Weng Zhenfa,
Prof. Mu ShanPing
Prof. Xu Chaoming

Thank you Dr. Lini Liao and Dr. Francois Picard
from Sheng! Project – TPMC, Sorbonne
Université, IRCAM.

Thank you Katharina Parczyk, Dr. Marion Märder,
Alexis Baskind and Emma Lo.

鸣谢！

