



# Chinese Pipa

with Tiffany Liu

*The pipa is a pear-shaped, four-stringed instrument similar to a lute, and one of the oldest known Chinese instruments, with a history dating back 2000 years. The name “pipa” comes from the sounds the strings make when they are plucked in either direction: “pi” and “pa.”*

*Originally from China, Tiffany Liu has been learning and performing pipa for over 20 years.*

Tiffany has provided several videos of her performing many different songs on the pipa, showing different techniques and styles. She has provided the following descriptions:

- **A Mighty River**: this is the song for my beautiful motherland where I grew up. It is a very soothing melody and also well-known in China. We choose this piece as a “Lun zhi” ( a basic technique) practice song, as you can see my right hand only did one single technique.
- **Dance of Golden Snake**: This is the song played in most Chinese festivals. I repeated the most popular part of the complete song and used two different techniques for each time: “zhe fen” and “gun zou”
- **Frolic Fishes in the Pond**: this a children’s song which exactly showed an image of playful fishes in the water.
- **Mei Hua San Nong**: also called “ Three Stanzas of Plum-Blossoms” , is one of the masterpieces which praises the plum for its pure and unbending features. “San nong,” or three stanzas, has a similar melody that is played three times in the piece. Plum flowers which blossom in freezing winter with a special fragrance have a unique place in the hearts of Chinese writers, poets, musicians and artists.
- **Spring in Tianshan**: The music depicts the beautiful scenery of the Tianshan Mountains in bright spring, and the festival celebration scenes of people of all minority groups in Xinjiang playing tambourines and singing and dancing at the foot of the Tianshan Mountains.
- **Zi Zhu Diao**: It is a folk song with the local color of Jiangnan, a place rich in fish and rice. Its melody is ups and downs, the mood is optimistic and friendly, the tune is one after another, and the rhythm is lighthearted, which is full of the simple and industrious character of the working people in the south of the Yangtze River.

## Links to Explore

- Interview with Tiffany about her experiences playing the pipa on PEI ([CBC](#))
- Information about the pipa ([Metropolitan Museum of Art](#))
- Information about “Yi Dance” and its composer ([Metropolitan Museum of Art](#))
- Pipa performances with different ensembles:
  - Luckiness and Eternity ([YouTube](#))
  - Spring of Tian Shan ([YouTube](#))
  - Heavenly Dance ([YouTube](#))
  - Video featuring the electric pipa, or “E-pa” ([YouTube](#))

For teaching videos and more activities to learn about Chinese Pipa with Tiffany, visit the ArtsSmarts PEI Our Musical Island resource at

[www.ourmusicalisland.ca](http://www.ourmusicalisland.ca)

These supplementary learning materials provided by:



[www.oliverssong.ca](http://www.oliverssong.ca)