

# *Songs and Dances* OF THE CHINESE YOUTH



SONGS AND DANCES OF  
THE CHINESE YOUTH

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## FOREWORD

CHINA has a rich heritage of folk dancing. Nearly every locality has its own folk tradition. There are, for example, no less than 126 different forms of folk dancing among the Han people in the coastal province of Shantung. These include the *Yangko Dance*, which is performed by large numbers of people on open ground, the *Lantern Dance*, and many other dances which are presented with or without aids or musical instruments. Half of the one thousand villages of Shangho County in Shantung have their own *Drum Yangko Dance* teams.

China also has a great wealth of folk music. Feng Tse-tsun, a flute player of Hopei Province, is very popular among the people, who call him the "sky render." He can play hours on end without repeating the same number. One folk singer in north-west China can sing one thousand different songs!

China is a multi-national country and each nationality has its own songs and dances, unique in style and tinged with rich local colour.

Since the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) the Uighur music and dances of Sinkiang have exercised much influence on those of the Han people. Among the Uighur folk music, the *Twelve Mukam* is well known. It takes twenty hours to perform the whole score.

The Mongolians and Tibetans are no less proficient in singing and dancing. Buyandelger, a Mongolian singer, won a first prize at the Fifth World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship. Her slow, lyrical style is expressive of the broad Mongolian grasslands. Tibetan folk songs are noted for their sonority. The words are usually poetic, imbued with the pure, simple emotions of the Tibetan people.

Many of the national minorities in south-west China have also great talent. When there is a festival in these areas, the young men and women will meet to sing and dance for several days.

Court and folk music and dances were the two main sources of dancing and singing in ancient China. As early as the Chou dynasty (12th century to 5th century B.C.), court music and dancing were well developed and the children of the royal family were required to learn the arts. From that time onwards folk music and dancing were steadily absorbed into court cultural life, and out of this, in the Tang and Sung dynasties (7th century to 13th century) developed classical Chinese opera.

Today China pays equal attention to classical and folk music and dances, and choreographers and musicians are assiduously studying classical singing and dancing, particularly the national theatrical arts which have retained most of China's classical traditions. Already they have made good use of the classical forms and experiences to develop folk songs and dances. The *Sword Dance*, which the Chinese youth will present at the Sixth World Festival, is a recreation of a classical dance.

Despite the fact that folk songs and dances have existed in China for thousands of years, it was only a decade ago that they began to be brought on to the stage. Formerly, most of them were performed on open ground by amateurs.

Since liberation, the People's Government has taken measures to foster folk art. Many state ensembles have been established to preserve and develop folk music and dances.

The People's Government sponsored a national folk song and dance festival in 1953 and again in 1955, with participants at each festival totalling more than a thousand. The festivals showed the rich and exuberant tradition of Chinese folk art and gave a fillip to Chinese folk music and dancing.

In the spring of the present year (1957) two national festivals of folk songs and dances were organized in Peking. Participants in the first festival were drawn from peasant amateurs in various parts of the country. About 1,300 people of 28 nationalities took part in the first festival. They presented 142 dances and 150 musical numbers.

Those in the second were professional song and dance troupes of different provinces. Their performances served chiefly to permit of an appraisal of the numbers created or recreated since 1955. About two hundred new dances and 140 new musical numbers were performed.

These two festivals were promoted as preparation for the Sixth World Youth Festival.

The Chinese people are proud of their cultural heritage, as was shown by the enthusiastic support given to all the festivals.

In 1956 the Communist Party of China put forward the policy of "letting flowers of many kinds blossom, diverse schools of thought contend," so that all active factors should be mobilized to better serve the people. Guided by this policy, folk art has flourished, resulting in the unprecedented achievements in folk music and dancing.

Many of the songs and dances have a history of centuries. For example, the two peasant dances in celebration of harvest from Anhwei Province, the *Fish Lantern Dance* and the *Harvest Bird Dance*, are said to date from the time of Emperor Shen Tsung of the Sung dynasty, nearly nine hundred years ago. Certain dances have been passed on from generation to generation. For example, Chin Kuang-ming, leading dancer of the *Drum Yangko Dance* of the Shantung troupe, is now 64 years old. This role was first played by his grandfather, and his grandson is now learning it.

Some folk dances, such as the *Lotus Dragon Dance* from Chekiang Province, the *Hopping Dance* of the Yi nationality in Kweichow Province, and the *Harvest Bird Dance*, have not been performed for scores of years. But once brought to public performance, they proved to be of high artistic value and at once became popular. Dances such as these also serve as valuable material in the study of the local customs.

While preserving and fostering folk traditions, China is also creating new folk songs and dances. Shenghsien County of Chekiang Province is noted for its folk music. Wei Chi-yuan, a 72-year-old peasant from this county, has composed a piece of instrumental music in four movements depicting the life of the peasants. He has been given a government award. At the first festival this spring a new folk dance, the *Wedding Dance*—a creation based on the wedding ceremonies prevailing in the northern part of Anhwei—was performed by peasants from that province. There is no question but that the policy of "letting flowers of many kinds blossom" has given a strong stimulus to folk songs and dances.

Based on China's rich folk traditions, many professional folk song and dance troupes have been set up throughout the country. At present there are 92 such troupes with a total of more than five thousand performers. These professional troupes maintain close ties with amateur artists. Whenever a professional troupe discovers a folk song or dance of artistic value, it gives it a careful appraisal, and, where necessary, restores and enriches it. As a result of their efforts, the professional troupes brought to light between 1953 and 1955 more than two hundred dances and five hundred musical items. These include such dances as the *Lion Dance*, the *Tea Pickers* and the *Butterfly* and the *Donkey Ride*—all of which have won international recognition.

In addition to developing her own folk art, China spares no effort to study and introduce to her people music and dances from abroad. Since the Han and Tang dynasties, the Chinese people have shown an eagerness to learn foreign dances, master musical instruments and benefit from artistic experiences. In this connection, Indian and Persian music and dances had particular impact on ancient China. Among many instruments, the *pipa* (four-stringed guitar), for example, was introduced from India during the Han dynasty. During the past few decades European music from the 17th century onwards has become firmly rooted in Chinese culture. Modern Chinese conservatoires, besides promoting Chinese folk music, pay much attention to training students to play Western musical instruments and to study systematically the achievements of the great musicians of different countries. Of recent years, China has trained a number of talented young artists, such as Fu Tsung and Liu Shih-kun who have won prizes at international piano contests. In the field of choreography, the Peking Dance School, which was established two years ago so as to better enable students to master foreign dances, has opened a ballet course and proposes also to establish a department of oriental dances.

China is not only introducing foreign music and dances to her audiences but is encouraging her composers and choreographers to use foreign musical instruments and forms of dancing to express Chinese life, so that they may gradually become an integral part of Chinese national tradition, just as the *pipa* has become a Chinese musical instrument, although it was brought from India two thousand years ago.

Young dancers, besides learning their art from the schools, are very keen on studying and popularizing foreign folk dances and have profited from the performances in China of foreign song and dance ensembles. Few of the troupes which have visited China have not left some number behind to enrich the repertoire of Chinese artists, and they are repeatedly performed in various parts of China.

Most of the items presented on the following pages have been chosen from the two national festivals held in Peking this spring.



An ensemble of Chinese youth of different nationalities sing in praise of the Motherland



Hung Hsien-nu, noted actress of Cantonese opera, has many stage achievements to her credit. Her singing is clear and mellow, and she plays her role with genuine feeling



Ballad singing accompanied by *chin* (lute) from Shantung Province



Wei Hsi-kuei in north-east style of *ta-ku*—story-telling with drum accompaniment



Folk ensemble from northern Shensi, selected only three years ago from among the peasant girls, has proved to be a group of gifted singers

*Happy New Year*, a north-east folk song of chorus, solo and duet, describes a bridegroom greeting his mother-in-law



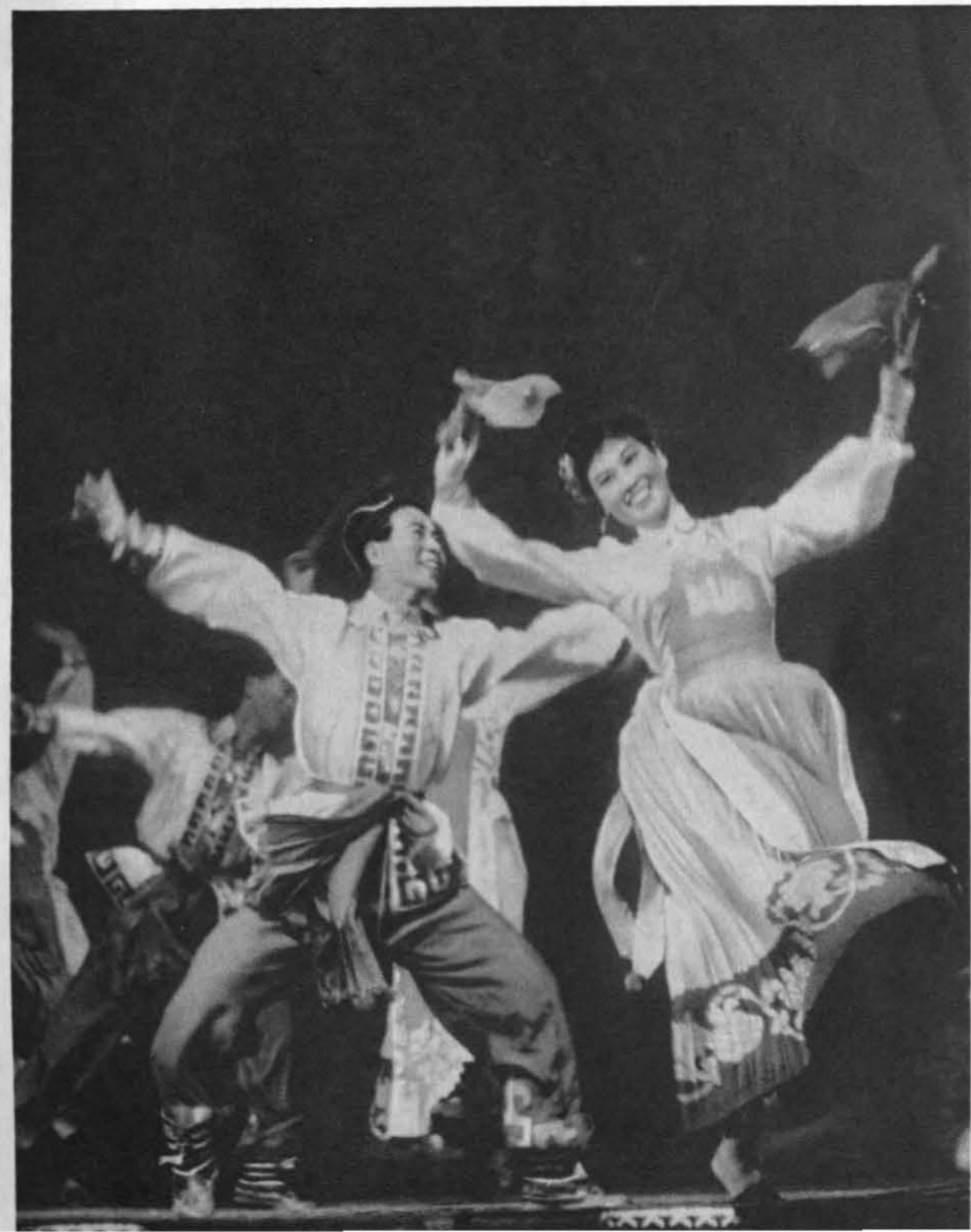
Kuo Lan-ying, operetta singer, in the *Wedding of Hsiao Erh-hei*, was a prize-winner at the Second World Festival of Youth and Students in 1949



*Flower Drum Dance, a Shantung folk dance two hundred years old. The drum is beaten with long tasselled sticks in a variety of ways.*



*Flower and Youth*, welcoming the arrival of spring and the awakening of love, sung and danced by young people, is adapted from folk songs and dances from Chinghai



*Yangko Dance*, the most popular peasant dance, particularly in north and north-east China, created out of the daily life of the peasants. The

To the Country Fair, a happy, playful, boisterous dance acted by young peasants



Whirling Flower Drum Dance, whirling synchronized with beating of small hand-drums, a folk dance popular south of the Yangtse River





Walking, dancing and acting on three-foot stilts is performed over wide areas. This particular dance is called *Fisherman Making a Catch*

*Taking the Bride*, dance-song depicting an old custom among fishermen in eastern Kwangtung. Previous to the wedding, the bride has to sing wedding songs and the bridegroom has to answer many difficult questions before he is allowed to take the bride away



Lantern Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth of the first moon according to the lunar calendar. A newly married couple, attracted by the street lantern parades, cannot help singing and dancing the *First Full Moon*





*Drum Yangko Dance, a popular folk dance from Shantung Province*



*Flower - Drum - Lantern Dance, a vigorous dance performed by peasants along the Huai River in Anhwei Province at temple fairs, festivals, or in the off-farming season*





*Dragon Dance*, a group dance demanding careful synchronization. It pictures the movements of a legendary dragon, symbol of strength and good fortune, popular for many centuries among the Chinese people. It is performed on festival days to express the joyous spirit of carnival

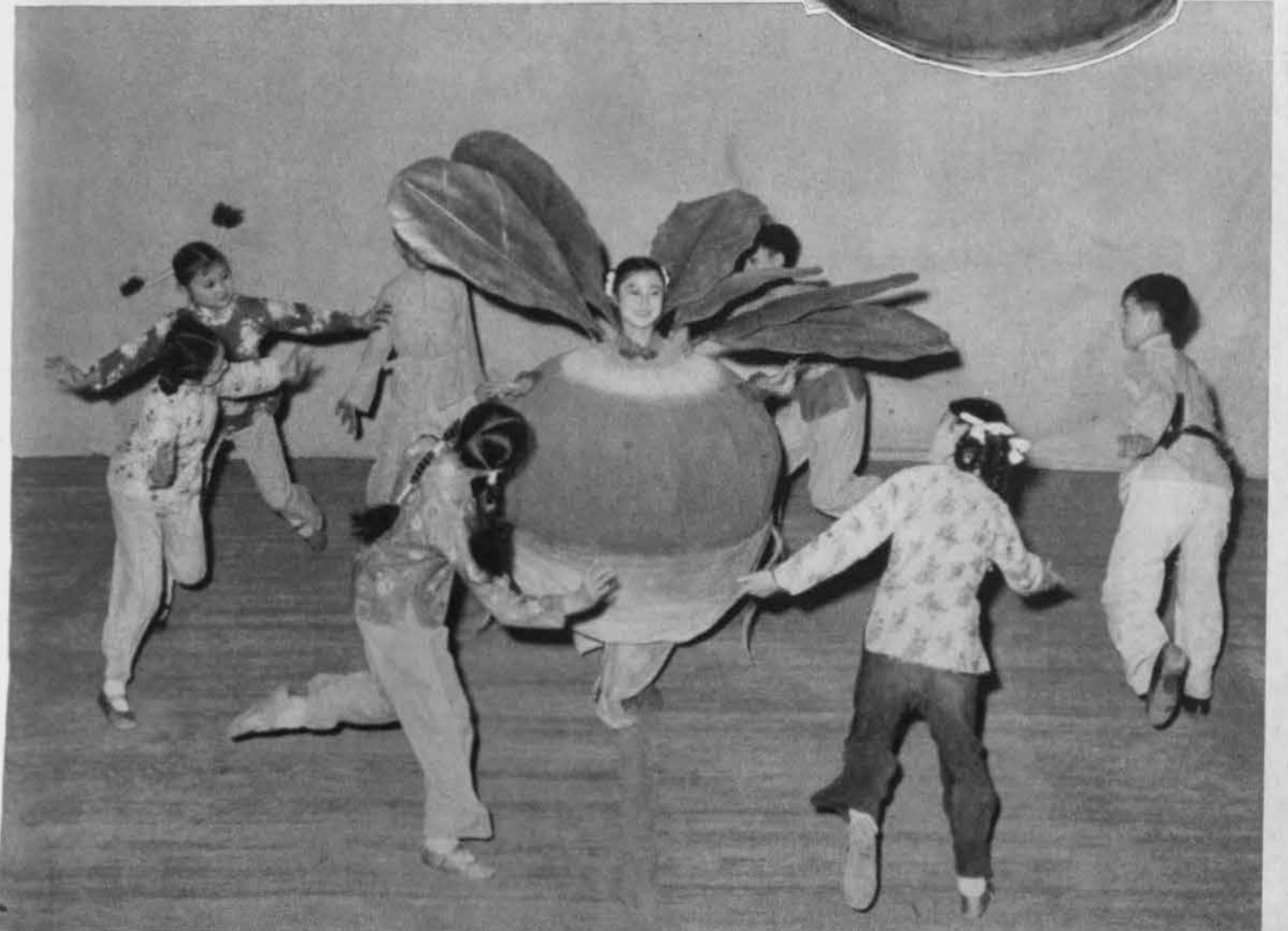


*Lazy Woman*, a folk dance of Shensi, in which a lazy woman is held up to ridicule by a mischievous but understanding lion



*Great Tea Hill*, a scene from a Yunnan flower-lantern play. Girls, while picking tea, meet a group of young men. They sing and dance together, teasing each other and making merry

*Pulling the Turnip*, a favourite dance of Chinese children. A little girl discovers a big turnip. She cannot pull it up alone, so she calls her little friends to help. And up it comes!





*Happy Couples*, one of China's many masked dances, dates back a thousand years. It depicts, with many amusing touches, the love-making of the older generations. It is still performed among the people in Ihing, Kiangsu





*Shepherd's Flute*, adapted from a classical dance, tells how a shepherd boy's flute attracts a pretty peasant girl, and they join in a dance

Chinese classical dancing is mainly adapted from classical operas. Present-day students go through basic training in dancing schools





The Chinese sword dance in classical opera is marked by graceful yet varied movements. *Sword Dance* shows the firmness of the character of the young women of ancient China





*Stealing the Magic Herb* is a dance version in classical style of the *White Snake* of Chinese mythology. Mistress White, personifying the White Snake, goes to the fairy hill to steal the magic herb to save her husband who is dangerously ill. A fight ensues between her and the boy guards. The aged fairy, owner of the mountain, sympathizing with the lady in distress, gives her the magic herb





*Jade Tray Dance* represents a classical dance originally performed by Yang Kuei-fei, famous beauty of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.)

*Liu Hai Frolicking with the Golden Toad*—a classical dance adapted from mythology depicting the love of a young woodcutter and a toad-incarnated girl





A Chinese orchestra composed of traditional instruments hundreds of years old



*Pipa*, an ancient instrument, generally used solo. It is most popular in central and southern China. Player: Chin Peng-chang



*Panhu* is a kind of fiddle having a high timbre, usually played solo. Player: Chang Chang-cheng



*Sheng* is a wind-instrument, indispensable in Chinese orchestral music. In ancient times, it was used on festival days or to welcome guests. Player: Hu Tien-chuan



*Cheng*, a kind of harpsichord two thousand years old. Player: Chao Yu-chai



The temperamental and physical characteristics of the Mongolian people are symbolized in their dancing, which is unrestrained. Their singing is high-pitched and drawn-out

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*Milkmaid Dance*, portraying life of the Mongolian working women



**Lower right**

Mongolian soprano Buyandelger, first-class prize-winner for her folk songs at the 1955 Fifth World Festival of Youth and Students, singing to the accompaniment of the horse-headed, two-stringed *matouchin*

The chorus singing of their happy life on the Mongolian steppe



*Wild Goose Dance*, performed by Chia Tso-kuang



A Tibetan cavalry brandishing swords on galloping horses. *Cavalry Dance* depicts the heroism of the valiant Tibetan people

*Bell and Drum Dance* is performed at autumn harvest by folk artists to wish the peasants good luck



*Prosperity Dance*, adapted from an old ritual dance, has become a popular one for celebrating big festivals



"Where there is a mountain, there is a song or dance for the Tibetan people," a folk saying goes. The Tibetans are said to have "an ocean of songs and dances." Of the Tibetan dances, some are religious. But a great many are folk dances, of which the following are most popular: fiddle dance, circular dance and foot-tapping dance, performed in most cases with singing, poetically worded. While the steps of the women dancers are graceful, those of the men are suggestive of rustic simplicity and forcefulness



Father and daughters, folk artists all three, singing ballads. Two play a musical accompaniment, while one leads with a foot-tapping movement

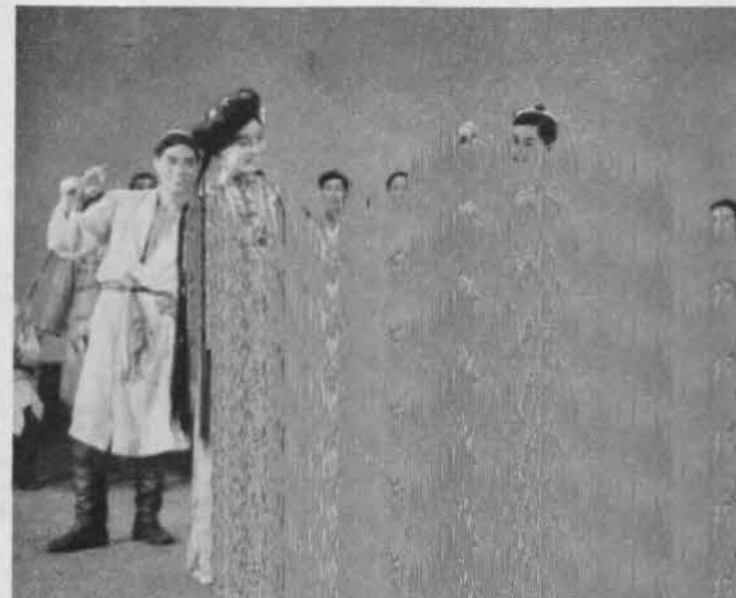
Tibetan girls singing in praise of their lovely homeland. It opens: "Where are you from? We hail from Shigatse. . . ."



Ahyimunisha, one of the most beloved of Uighur ballad singers



The lovely leading dancer holding a dish in each hand. Dish Dance depicts the joy of work and life of the Uighur people



Practically all Uighurs who live in the foot-hills of the lofty Tianshan Mountains in Sinkiang are good singers and dancers. Uighur dances are noted for their strong sense of rhythm. The movement of the hands and arms are exquisite, and the head movements have no like in other Chinese dances. The steps are as expressive as they are varied. The Uighurs have many kinds of musical instruments, mostly string and percussion. Noteworthy is the role played by the musicians. Besides furnishing musical accompaniment — which is their main job — they sometimes take part in the dancing and singing, giving the performance an atmosphere of heightened animation

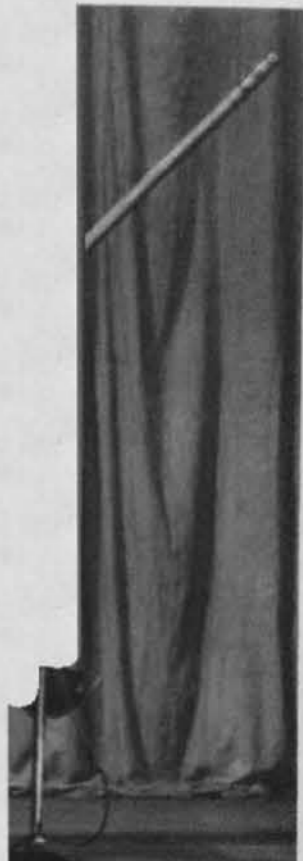
*Joy of Harvest Dance* is adapted from *Twelve Mukam*, a masterpiece of Uighur folk music

*Upper right*

Young vocalist Ahputujeyimu Ahomaiti



*Tanpoerh*, a plucked instrument handed down from antiquity, is indispensable to Uighur singing and dancing. Performer: Yusanchiang







*Lusheng Dance is a favourite group dance of the Miaos performed from autumn harvest time to the sowing season the following spring. The two male dancers in the background are playing lusheng*

The Miaos, who make the hilly regions in south China their home, often dance to the accompaniment of *lusheng*—reed-pipes made in various sizes, some many feet long. The movements of their dances appear to be quite simple, but are really very forceful. At festivals or market fairs, young people in thousands assemble in the open or by the hillside, singing and dancing to their hearts' content

*Wedding Dance depicting the joy of a young couple in traditional matrimonial ceremonies*



*Noted Miao singer Ahpao*



*Drum Dance in Circular Formation is popular among the Miaos in western Hunan*



Korean singer, Bang Cho Sun, singing the *Song of the Maiden*



*Water Carriers*, a Korean dance depicting girls going in the morning to the stream to fetch water

Korean dancing is characterized by its graceful movements. The women dancers glide and turn with such ease and dignity as to convey a sense of stillness in action

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*Dance of the Peasants' Joy*, the peasants dance to celebrate a rich harvest





Amateur moon - lute  
player Shamawutse



*Pawu*, on which flutist Shih-  
hsuehtien is playing a tune,  
is an inseparable companion  
of the Yi youth, who use it to  
express their love to their  
sweethearts

The folk songs of the Yi  
inhabitants of the hilly  
regions in south-west  
China are melodious.  
Their dances are char-  
acterized by healthy,  
vigorous and rhythmic  
movements, performed to  
the accompaniment of  
lutes shaped like a full  
moon. The main themes  
of their dances are the  
daily life and the love-  
making of the working  
people

This dance describes how  
two young girls are try-  
ing to catch small fish.  
Held in their hands are  
bamboo tobacco boxes  
which the dancers use as  
drums and on which they  
beat rhythmically  
during the performance



The music and dances of the Tai people are as charming as the sub-tropical land in which they dwell on the south-western border. They have an admiration for and a love of peacocks, which, they believe, personify the beautiful and the virtuous. *Duet Peacock Dance*, shown on the right, expresses the happy love of the young people



*The Prince and the Peacock Princess*, a Tai dance  
adapted from ancient mythology





The Lis of Hainan Island, industrious, brave and passionate, are very fond of singing. They sing while at work, in love or even when receiving or seeing off guests. The Li women pride themselves on being as proficient at singing as they are in embroidery

The third day of the third moon of the lunar year is a happy occasion when young Li people flock to the coconut groves to select their mates. The dance *The Third of the Third Moon* depicts this very ancient custom



A first favourite with the Lis is the *Firewood Dance*, performed after the day's wood collecting. The girls beat the bamboo poles rhythmically on the ground while the young men jump over the poles



*Peacock Dance*



Liu Shih-kun, an eighteen-year-old pianist, won third prize in the International Liszt Piano Festival held in Hungary in 1956



Han Hsien-kuang playing the French horn



Seventeen-year-old violinist Sheng Chung-kuo can already play major pieces from Western classical composers. He is a student of the middle school attached to the Central Conservatoire



The Shanghai choir singing *Praise of the Motherland*, a popular piece by the young composer Liu Shih-jen



Fan Yu-lun, a prize-winner in the folk song competition at the 1955 Fifth World Festival of Youth and Students

The Peking Central Orchestra gives concerts regularly playing well-known Chinese and foreign musical compositions

Students of the Peking Dance School practising ballet movements



Chinese dancers are earnestly studying classical ballet and other foreign dancing so as to enrich Chinese dancing art



A scene from the ballet *Nutcracker Suite*



A scene from the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*





Rumanian folk dance jointly performed by Vietnamese students in China and their Chinese fellow-students



Burmese folk dance accompanied by singing



Shopsko Dance, a folk dance of the Yugoslav "Kolo" Folk Dance Ensemble



Hungarian *Bottle Dance*

The Chinese people — the youth in particular — are very fond of foreign singing and dancing of which many brilliant examples have been introduced to the Chinese stage and have won wide popularity

Vietnamese folk dance, *Rejoicings in a Bamboo Grove*



*Swan Dance*, an item from the Soviet Little Birch Dance Ensemble



Indonesian *Umbrella Dance*



Members of a Chinese art delegation to Egypt getting some tips on Egyptian folk dancing



A member of a Chinese cultural delegation to Indonesia learning to play an Indonesian folk instrument



Chinese dancers learning hand movements from an Indian dancer



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Peking opera actress Wu Su-ying in a Japanese dance *Fujimusume*





