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**COMBINING WESTERN ROCK AND TAIWANESE FOLK MUSIC,  
SHENG XIANG & BAND MAKE THEIR AMERICAN DEBUT AT  
CAL PERFORMANCES FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 AT 8:00 P.M. IN HERTZ HALL**

**FILM/SYMPOSIUM: Department of East Asian Languages and Culture presents a documentary film and panel discussion on Sheng Xiang's role in preventing the construction of the Meinung dam in southern Taiwan Saturday, September 10 at 12:00 p.m. in 145 Dwinelle, UC Berkeley Campus**

**BERKELEY, August 3, 2005** – In his first United States appearance, composer, musician and social activist **Sheng Xiang** brings his distinctive musical hybrid of folk and contemporary sounds to Cal Performances **Friday, September 9, at 8:00 p.m.** The group of five eclectic musicians playing traditional and modern instruments includes Sheng Xiang (vocals, acoustic guitar), long-time collaborator **Zhong Yongfeng** (lyrics), **Takashi Hirayasu** (*sanxian*, a three-string lute), **Zhong Yufeng** (*pipa*, lute), and a fifth artist, to be announced. The performance will be based on Sheng Xiang's newest album *Getting Dark*, this year's winner of three Golden Melody Awards, the Chinese equivalent of the Grammy Awards. The songs will be sung in Hakka, a dialect of Chinese; Sheng Xiang, popular in Taiwan for his support of social and environmental causes as well as his music, will provide commentary between songs in Mandarin and English.

A free **film/symposium** titled "Music, Community Politics, and Environmental Justice in Taiwan," featuring a documentary film, *East of County Road 184*, followed by a panel discussion on Sheng Xiang's role in the political movement that stopped the building of the Meinung dam in southern Taiwan, will be held on **Saturday, September 10 at 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.** in 145 Dwinelle. The panel discussion will include **Guo-Juin Hong**, Assistant Professor, Duke University, Sheng Xiang and other artists from the band and **Aviva Imhof**, Campaigns Director, International Rivers Network.

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## SHENG XIANG

Sheng Xiang was born in the farming village of Meinung in southern Taiwan, an area rich in Hakka heritage. The Hakka, literally meaning "guest people," migrated during the early 1600s from war-torn northern mainland China to the mountainous areas of Taiwan. As a child Sheng Xiang received no formal musical training but was greatly influenced by his grandmother's love of traditional Hakka mountain songs, often depicting the hardships of rural life. He formed his first band in college, frequently combining his two favorite forms of music, folk and rock 'n' roll, with Van Morrison, Pink Floyd and Bruce Springsteen among his preferred practitioners.

In 1999, Sheng Xiang joined forces with poet and political activist **Zhong Yongfeng**, also a lover of folk music inspired by mountain living, and formed the Labor Exchange Band. Their first album *Let Us Sing the Mountain Songs* was in response to the government's controversial plan to construct a dam in Meinung, potentially destroying much of the local countryside. The battle cry of the protesters became the album. In the end, the government agreed not to build the dam. For the album, Sheng Xiang received the Golden Melody Awards for Best Producer and Composer, and his reputation as a politically active musician with a unique sound was launched.

From the success of the anti-dam movement, the Labor Exchange Band continued to raise awareness of environmental and social issues. The group recorded a second album in 2001, *The Night March of the Chrysanthemums*, which focused on the plight of the local agricultural industry in an era of expanding world trade. Once again, Sheng Xiang and Labor Exchange Band were honored for their music; they were named Best Band by the Golden Melody Awards. Although the Labor Exchange Band disbanded in 2003, Sheng Xiang and Zhong Yongfeng continued collaborating. In 2004, they formed a second group, Water3, and produced *Getting Dark*, an album telling the stories of Hakka migrant workers attempting to adjust to urban life. The collection incorporates a number of musical styles in addition to folk and rock: Taiwanese funeral procession music, *gezaixi* (traditional Taiwanese opera music) and even video game background music. The album won three Golden Melody Awards. Given the fast pace of Taiwanese life, thirty-something Sheng Xiang maintains a strong conviction that music is capable of changing society.

For his first U.S. tour, Sheng Xiang's newest ensemble includes writing partner Zhong Yongfeng, **Takashi Hirayasu**, a master of *sanxian* from Okinawa, Japan, and **Zhong Yufeng**, a rare crossover musician with formal training in Chinese classical as well as Taiwanese folk music. The program will be announced from the stage.

### TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sheng Xiang & Band** on **Friday, September 9** in Hertz Hall are priced at **\$22.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu).

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The *Contra Costa Times* and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season media sponsors of the 2005/06 performing arts season.

Cal Performances' 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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(Sheng Xiang & Band's calendar continued on the next page.)

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

**Friday, September 9 at 8:00 p.m.**

**Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus**  
College Ave. at Telegraph, Berkeley

*World Stage*

**Sheng Xiang & Band**

**Sheng Xiang**, vocals, acoustic guitar

**Zhong Yongfeng**, lyrics

**Zhong Yufeng**, lute, *pipa*

**Takashi Hirayasu**, *sanxian*

Another musician, tba

**Program:** Sheng Xiang & Band play a blend of Taiwanese folk music and western rock on modern and traditional instruments intertwined with social consciousness and environmental concerns.

**Tickets:** \$22.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door.

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**Saturday, September 10 at 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

**145 Dwinelle, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

**Film/Symposium:** “Music, Community Politics and Environmental Justice in Taiwan”

**FILM/SYMPOSIUM**

“Music, Community Politics, and Environmental Justice in Taiwan,” featuring a documentary film, *East of County Road 184*, followed by a panel discussion on Sheng Xiang’s role in the political movement that stopped the building of the Meinung dam in southern Taiwan, will be held on **Saturday, September 10 at 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.** in 145 Dwinelle. The panel discussion will include **Guo-Juin Hong**, Assistant Professor, Duke University; **Sheng Xiang** and other artists from the band; and **Aviva Imhof**, Campaigns Director, International Rivers Network. This event is presented by Cal Performances in cooperation with the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Institute of East Asian Studies, the Center for Chinese Studies and the Department of Music, UC Berkeley, with support from the Townsend Center and the Berkeley Consortium for the Arts. Admission is free; no tickets required.

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