

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS



Sheng Xiang & Band featuring Takashi Hirayasu and Ken Ohtake

Friday, September 9, 2005, 8 pm

Hertz Hall

Featuring

Sheng Xiang	<i>lead vocals, acoustic guitar</i>
Zhong Yufeng	<i>pipa (lute), san xian and Yue Qin (moon guitar)</i>
Takashi Hirayasu	<i>vocals, san xian (three-string lute)</i>
Ken Ohtake	<i>acoustic guitar, electric guitar</i>
Zhong Yongfeng	<i>poetry recitation</i>

PROGRAM

The Hatamsui River Has Been Writing Our Genealogy
The Night Buses
Sing Mountain Songs, So We Won't Be Worried
County Road 184
My Old 125cc Motorcycle
Getting Dark
City Founding Pioneer
Job
Tossing and Turning
More Despicable
Old Davie
Jobless

The performance will last approximately 90 minutes and there will be no intermission.

*Sponsored by the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Department of Music
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ABOUT THE ARTIST

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, combining his two favorite forms of music, folk and rock ‘n’ roll. Western influences included Van Morrison, Pink Floyd and Bruce Springsteen.

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 album became the battle cry of the protesters. 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 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, 30-something Sheng Xiang maintains a strong conviction that music is capable of changing society.

For this, his first U.S. tour, Sheng Xiang’s newest ensemble includes writing partner Zhong Yongfeng, Takashi Hirayasu, a master of *sanshian* from Okinawa, Japan, and Zhong Yufeng, a rare crossover musician with formal training in Chinese classical as well as Taiwanese folk music.

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