

Yun Ling Tian Lai

“Sounds of Nature from the Mountain Tops”

Introduction



Situated in South West China, Yunnan Province has a total of twenty-six different minority groups living together in harmony, making Yunnan the

most culturally varied of all Chinese provinces. The colourful customs and mysterious culture of the local minority groups of Yunnan province are embodied in the array of original minority music and dance that has evolved over thousands of years. And according to local folk-lore, this itself is believed to have propagated from the earth and natural springs of Yunnan. Over the last few years, Yunnan province has produced a number of excellent music and dance performances. One such performance is called *Yun Ling Tian Lai* (“Sounds of Nature from the Mountain Tops”), which is an extravaganza of original dance and song of the ethnic minorities of Yunnan Province.

Yun Ling Tian Lai has taken the essence the original dance and song of 16 minority groups in Yunnan Province and has created a wonderful stage performance. Some of the songs have been sung traditionally for over a thousand years, and this modern adaptation for the stage, has managed to preserve the original flavor of these traditional songs and has brought some of Yunnan’s magnificent and ancient culture to the modern stage for all to see.

Over the last few years, *Yun Ling Tian Lai* has performed throughout China and has attracted much interest both within the musical world of China and from audiences alike. Many of the songs within this collection

have also won competitions and awards in China. The song *Hai Cai Qiang*, sung by Li Huaixiu and Li Huaifu, is 600 years old and is said to have come from the ancient sounds of nature. This song won first prize in the CCTV National Youth Singing Competition. Another song *Zai Yang Gu* (“Plantation Song”) was in the top ten most popular Chinese songs in 2004; and the song *Yi Wo Que* (“A nest of Sparrows”) inspired the birth of a whole new musical genre in China. The songs of *Yun Ling Tian Lai* have also enjoyed a degree of international success, the song *Shui Mu Niao* (“Mother Bird”) won first prize for traditional song with accompaniment in a national German song competition in 2004.

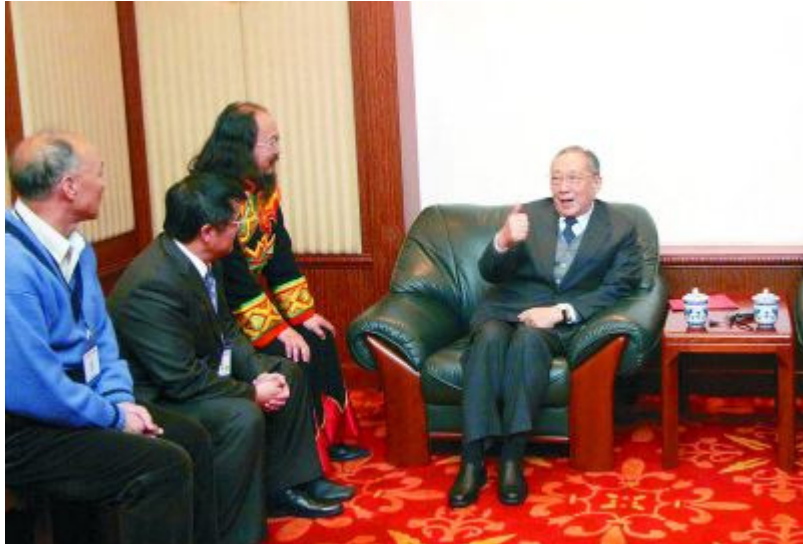


This one-hundred strong performance group are all from the local minority population of rural areas in Yunnan province. Some are from distant mountainous regions, others from impoverished lowland villages. And even though none of them have received any professional training, without exception they all bring their gift and personality to the stage, giving the audience a unique insight into the history and varied culture of this beautiful province of South West China. *Yun Lin Tian Lai* is a wonderful collection of music and the unique sounds of nature from the mountains of Yunnan.



Chinese Foreign Minister Praises *Yun Ling Tian*

Lai



On the evening of the 19th, the former Chinese foreign minister Li Lanqing watched the extravaganza of *Yun Ling Tian Lai* at the Beijing Tian Qiao Theatre, after the performance Mr. Li also interviewed the creators of this performance.

Having watched the performance, Mr. Li simply had three words to say to the producers – “Excellent, Excellent, Excellent!”. He expressed how *Yun Ling tian Lai* truly gave the audience a chance to experience for themselves the beauty, richness and simplicity of the original culture of Yunnan Province. Worthy of even greater applause is the skill with which this original material has been adapted for the stage. Such a successful adaptation of traditional song and dance for the modern stage is

unprecedented in China, and Mr. Li is confident that *Yun Ling Tian Lai* is both suitable for the national stage within China and more importantly, is more than capable of taking its place on the International stage.

Li Lanqing related *Yun Ling Tian Lai* to its predecessor and sister performance – *Yunnan Yingxiang* (“Reflection Yunnan”). The earlier creation had its emphasis on the original dance of the minority cultures of Yunnan, whereas the emphasis of the later *Yun Ling Tian Lai* has shifted slightly, giving more prominence to traditional song. This progression from dance to song, and the unique fusing of the two has given audiences of both a wonderful experience. Mr. Li also expressed his hope that the performers of *Yun Ling Tian Lai* and other artists of this beautiful province would continue to work hard and progress, making full use of the rich cultural resources that Yunnan is home to, and maintaining the integrity of what their traditions stand for while at the same time learning from the experience and expertise of the West. Exploring further avenues of creativity within minority cultures and endeavouring to bring this rich and varied culture to the stage, making an even greater offering from Chinese culture onto the international stage.

Reporter: Wang Yonggang