



1. KHAEN 𑂑𑂗𑂢𑂰

Native to Laos, the khaen is closely related to the Chinese sheng. This free-reed mouth organ has vertical bamboo pipes with finger holes, and a wooden wind chest that creates a violin-like sound when blown through. The Khaen is commonly used as dance accompaniment or as a solo instrument.

2. HULUSHENG 葫芦笙

Hulusheng ("gourd sheng") is a variation of the Chinese free-reed mouth organ, the sheng. The instrument consists of five bamboo pipes with finger holes, reeds, and a wind chest made from a gourd. The player blows air into the blowpipe alternately exhaling and inhaling to activate the reeds within the wind chest to produce sound. Hulusheng are common folk instruments among the ethnic minorities of China, often varying in construction and playing technique from group to group.

3. PENGLING 碰铃

A set of two cup-shaped bells made of copper or brass attached by a string. The player holds a bell in each hand and strikes them together to produce a delicate, reverberating tone. Pengling are used in Buddhist rituals, as well as in folk songs, opera, and ensemble music.

4. XIAOBO 小钹

Xiaobo literally translates to "small cymbal." The pair of cymbals are struck together to produce a clear, crisp tone that is often used as accompaniment for operas or in ensemble music.

5. SUONA 唢呐

Similar to the oboe, the suona is a cone-shaped wind instrument with a double reed. The instrument was introduced to China from Central Asia between 200 and 400AD. It has since been a popular accompaniment to dance songs, operas, and ceremonies such as funerals or weddings.



"Joyce" performed by Hou Yanqiu, Wu Promotion

6. GONG 锣

The gong is a percussion instrument comprised of a circular metal disk that is struck with a mallet. There are various sizes and shapes of gongs. This particular instrument originates from Thailand, and is made of hand-hammered bronze.

7. DIZI 笛子

Made out of bamboo, this side-blown flute derives its distinct nasal timbre from a thin membrane that covers the hole between the embouchure and finger holes. The flute is capable of a variety of styles—from lyrical to energetic—with a range of virtuosic techniques that have made it a common solo instrument since the mid-20th century.



"Gu Su Xing" performed by Ming Zeng, Felmay

8. PIPA 琵琶

Originating over two thousand years ago, the pipa is still one of the most popular of the Chinese instruments. It is a four-stringed, plucked instrument reminiscent of the lute. The pipa has a pear-shaped body with a varying number of frets, ranging from 12 to 26.



"Opening of Heaven's Gates" performed by Vivian Ge & Gillian Jian, NTDonMusic

9. SANXIAN 三弦

Sanxian, meaning "three strings," is a plucked instrument with a long, fretless neck. The body is traditionally made from snakeskin that is stretched over a rounded, rectangular resonator. The sanxian is commonly used as a solo instrument as well as for accompanying story singing and musical drama performances.



"Waves Washing the Sand" performed by Evelyn Qing Chang, evelynqingchang

10. YUEQIN 月琴

The yueqin is a plucked lute instrument with a short neck and four strings. The instrument derives its name from its round, moon-shaped body, as "yue" is Chinese for "the moon." Though often performed in operas, the yueqin is also used as a solo instrument.

11. ERHU 二胡

Commonly referred to as the "Chinese violin," the erhu is a two-stringed spike fiddle that originated in Central Asia in the 900s. Spike fiddles are characterized by thin bodies that are played upright on the musician's lap. Currently the erhu is played in traditional music arrangements as well as in contemporary styles, such as pop, jazz, and rock.



"North Easter Folk Song" performed by Min Hui Fen, Ding Yi Music

12. YANQIN 扬琴

The yangqin is a trapezoid-shaped dulcimer that originated in Persia. Like other dulcimers, it is a hammered instrument that is played by striking the strings with bamboo mallets. The yangqin is used both as a solo instrument as well as in ensembles.



"Flower Drum Dance" performed by Yi Tao, civu2010

13. ZHENG 箏

The zheng was invented during the Qin dynasty (897-221BC) and is often accompanied by the prefix "gu" which means "antiquity." It is a long zither with moveable bridges and 16 to 25 strings. The right hand plucks the strings, while the left hand presses on the strings left of the bridge. Traditionally the zheng was used in folk music, local operas, and at court. Over the last century however, it transitioned into being primarily a solo instrument.



"Water Lotus" performed by Bei Bei, HaciendaMusic Zheng