



Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

August 2016

MUSIC & TEA

A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

FOREST SONG

2016 SHENG PUERH MAOCHA

THE GUQIN

ONE OF TEA'S OLDEST FRIENDS





FOREST SONG

Music and Tea have been dating for centuries. Many of the sages who cultivated their musical abilities were also Chajin. There is great music in a fine tea, even when drunk in silence. This month, we'll explore the age-old romance between the Leaf and music while drinking an amazing maocha steeped in the symphony of the forest!

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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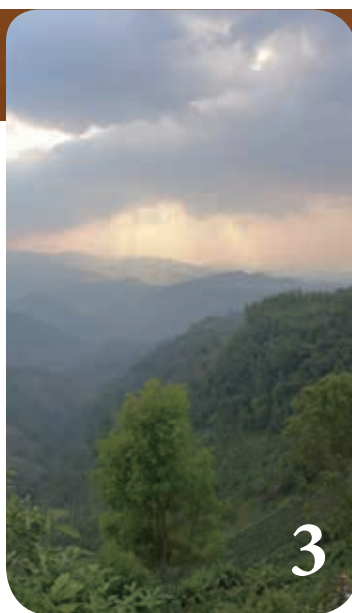
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森之歌



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From the Editor

In August, we reach the end of summer and the heat starts to break in Taiwan. It is the perfect time to start preparing roasted Taiwanese oolong and Wuyi Cliff Tea. The transition between seasons, as one is ending and another yet to come, is often the best time of year. It is when we notice the weather more often, and therefore feel a part of Nature. It is also the time for summer teas like Oriental Beauty and Elevation to start coming in, which means tasting those teas and traveling to Beipu and Sun Moon Lake. There are also a lot of young sheng and green tea sessions in August, as we say goodbye to the season. Some old-growth sheng from this year, like this month's tea, is superb at this time of year, as the tea has had a few months to calm down and the weather is perfect for it, especially in the morning.

The overarching theme for us in 2016 is finding new and exciting ways to connect this community. We are continuing to work on a website and app to facilitate global tea discussion and sessions. We continue working hard to provide video supplements to this magazine, showing you as much as we tell. We have also started airing live broadcasts on our Facebook page at the beginning of each month. Beyond that, we've started the 2016 photo contest, which was so much fun last year! This year there are even more prizes. And there is some other exciting news: we are going to put a portion of the money raised from this year's old-growth cakes towards a scholarship fund. We want to fly one person a year to Taiwan so they can spend ten days at the Hut. Eventually, we also would like to offer a second scholarship so that someone can come along on our annual trip for free. Once we have accumulated enough money, we will begin the submission process so you can nominate a friend who deserves to come!

The Center is in need of a photographer/designer/tech-savvy volunteer. If you, or anyone you know, would like to come live in Taiwan, we are offering free room and board, teachings and of course the opportunity to serve the best tea community ever, not to mention to help create the best tea magazine in the world! Living at the Center for a half a year to a year is a great way to cultivate a deep, lifelong tea practice. It is enough time to gain a deep understanding of tea philosophy and our brewing methods. (And since I have started teaching the whisked tea *temae* of our tradition, there is now the rare chance to learn all of the five brewing methods of our tradition.) Contact us if you have a candidate in mind.

The relationship between music and Tea goes back millennia. The Chinese zither has accompanied thousands of tea sessions. Sound activates tea. One of the things I heard the most on our 2016 Global Tea Hut trip was that the sound of the forest changed the energy of the tea sessions, and also the Qi of the tea in one's body. Sound can definitely catalyze the energy of tea, which also means that we have to be careful bringing them together. There are instances when the music can intrude upon the tea, just as the tea can intrude upon the music. In the Center, we have years of experience working with sound and tea. Around the world, many of you have also held events exploring the relationship between Tea and various kinds of music. Some of the best sessions of my life were with musicians, like the legendary shakuhachi session in Kiev, Ukraine.

We decided to devote a whole issue to exploring the relationship between music and Tea, including the absence of music when silence is better. Often, we forget that music and the environment are as much a part of *chaxi* layout as the tea cloth, the flowers or the tea pillow. This is because the music is often in the background. It is a soundtrack, in other words. Similarly, we sometimes forget just how important the score is in creating the feel of a scene in a movie. But it is incredible how much of a difference the music makes. When it is working well, though, it remains subtle and supportive of the tea without overwhelming it. We hope this issue helps educate and inspire you to further explore the age-old friendship between Tea and music.



Further Reading

- 1) *Tea Music I*, Issue 34, Nov. 2014, pp. 31-32
- 3) *Tea with Music*, a bonus article by Qing Yu
- 4) *Balance In All Things*, A bonus, extended edition of Brandon Boyd's Teawayfarer article.
- 5) *The Production & Processing of Puerh Tea*, Issue 32, Sept. 2014, pp. 15-24

*Further Readings are all posted on our blog each month.

TEA OF THE MONTH

For this month, we needed a tea that would respond to sound—a sensitive forest tea from trees that grew up around Nature soundscapes. We chose a loose-leaf *maocha* from one of the Five Mountains from which all tea originates, called Big Snow Mountain (*Da Xue Shan*). It is a powerful organic tea that offers the perfect end to the summer. Watching these leaves open in your bowl will change a whole season of your life. This will be one of the highlights of our tea drinking together this year!

To introduce this month's tea, we thought we'd share some insights on the relationship between trees and sound and then dive into the different kinds of trees in Yunnan, which is a topic that every tea lover needs to explore, and one fraught with lots of the pitfalls of marketing and misinformation.

After the release of the seminal book *The Secret Life of Plants* in the 1970s, which is a must-read for all tea lovers, ideas about the relationship between music and plant growth trickled into the mainstream. The book is a collection of all kinds of unique and ambitious

research into plants, some of which seems like pseudoscience, but much of which can change your understanding of the natural world. Several of the studies in the book regarding the effects of music on plant growth were republished in popular magazines of the time. They showed that certain music inspired more growth in vegetables—both in terms of size and yield. Other studies demonstrated that plants would grow towards a single speaker playing certain kinds of music and away from other kinds of music. Once popularized, these studies caused many people in the late seventies and early eighties to do their own personal experiential research in to talking to their house plants, playing music for them, etc. Such experiments are still worthwhile today, and doing them will change your relationship to Tea as a tree, Tea as a liquor and to the music you may or may not choose for your tea sessions.

After some years, other scientists were curious why the plants would respond to certain kinds of music and reject others. Why, in fact, would they respond to music at all?

Obviously, the jungles have thrived in vibrant verdure for millennia without any music. Why would plants respond to music and why, where and when did they evolve the capacity to do so? In this research, the scientists repeated earlier experiments, only this time they exposed the plants to particular frequencies of sound, one at a time. They found that the music that plants responded to most favorably all contained certain wavelengths of sound. They then began comparing those frequencies to Nature-scapes, hoping there would be an equivalent in Nature. They found that there was a natural equivalent: *birdsong*! This profound revelation was explored in depth in the sequel to *The Secret Life of Plants*, called *The Secret Life of Birds*. Once we understand the interbeing of Nature, the discovery that birdsong affects trees and plants is not far-fetched. Have you ever been anywhere green where there weren't also birds? Mightn't some of the death of forests have to do with a lack of birds, in turn due to a lack of insects caused by pesticide use? What role does sound play in the evolution of life on Earth?



Forest Song



Big Snow Mt., Yunnan



2016 Sheng Puerh Maocha



Wa Aboriginals



~1800 Meters

*Check out the Tea of
the Month video to
learn more!*



www.globalteahut.org/videos



The details and facts of these studies aren't as important as the overarching theme, which is that all of Nature is connected, and in far more infinite and subtle ways than we could ever understand. One of the things that participants on our trip to Yunnan this year shared about was the amazing sound of the tea forests. Many said that even weeks later, after returning home, they were still able to close their eyes and hear all the birds, insects and other sounds as clear as day, since it made such an impression on them.

What does this have to do with our Tea of the Month? We know that we usually devote more of this

section of each issue to the place and processing of the tea we are going to share, but since this issue is about sound and music, we thought it worthwhile to draw your attention to an often-neglected aspect of each month's tea, which is, of course, the sound that has gone into it. As people intrude and impinge upon the old tea forests, this subtle aspect of tea production will be unconsciously trod upon, and with a deaf ear.

The fact remains that a lot of sound has gone into the tea we will all be sharing this month: bird-song, cicadas and a symphony of other insects, the wind and the trees themselves, as they flutter and groan

their songs to one another. And all of these vibrations are absorbed by the tea we drink. As we send this forest tea out around the world, we are also sharing these sounds, or at least their effects. These buds were born into that forest symphony, raised in it and, of course, educated in its language. There was a time when we understood that language and were fluent in its intricacies. Our ancestors had a much larger Nature-vocabulary than we ever will. But maybe a magical tea like this one will help inspire in us a desire to relearn some of the lost Nature sounds, starting with a deep appreciation for them.

The Song of Puerh

The "song" of puerh isn't just the frequencies we can hear with our ears—the birdsong, cicadas, the wind rustling the leaves, and so on. There is a vast spectrum of sound beyond our psychosomatic constitution, beyond our capacity to hear. A dog would hear much more in the forest, and even what it heard would not span the entirety of sounds. Old tea trees in the forests of Yunnan are sponges for life. They are covered in molds, vines, and other symbiotic life forms—from those we can see down to the microscopic. In fact, one of the reasons the quality of puerh tea is so dependent upon the trees and their location is that the trees and leaves are covered in hundreds of species of bacteria and mold before picking, all of which encourage a unique fermentation in the tea. These microorganisms are also part of the song of puerh. Do they also have a sound? If our ears were stronger, would we hear them as a symphony as loud as the insects, wildlife and wind we are able to hear with our own ears? Does that sound also influence the tea leaves?

The "song" of any tea also includes the humans who process it, who are as natural to the tea trees as any other animal, especially when we live in balance. There are two main aspects of puerh produc-

tion that make it unique. Different kinds of tea find their quality in different ratios between the terroir/tea trees and the processing skills of the farmers. For oolong, quality is at least half due to the processing and half the raw material (tea trees/terroir). However, with puerh, like this month's tea, the quality is almost exclusively the terroir and the trees. There is little processing skill to speak of, mostly just simple preparation. This is changing, as local aboriginals focus more on puerh production and improve as a result. Again, the fermentation caused by the plentiful microbial life covering puerh is one of the reasons puerh tea is so special. This fermentation, more simply, is what really defines puerh tea, and the unique stages in its production act to facilitate fermentation. The first defining stage in puerh production is the de-enzyming, called "kill-green (sha qing)" because it literally kills a green enzyme in tea, which is done at a lower temperature for a shorter period of time than with most tea. This allows heat-resistant spores to survive the process, which will re-flourish the tea with a fauna of microbial life. The second unique stage is sun-drying, which activates these spores and therefore also encourages post-production fermentation.

普洱頌





Kinds of Trees

There is a lot of confusion surrounding the kinds of trees in Yunnan, and lacking common standards, understanding puerh tea trees can be difficult to navigate without standards. Different publications and vendors will have their own terms, categories and ways of explaining trees. Since the information is controlled by merchants, much of it is dishonest, which furthers the problem. The label “old-growth,” for example, not only does not indicate any standardized age of tree, but it is often completely untrue. There are far more cakes labeled “old-growth” than there is genuine old-growth raw material in the world, and by several thousand times. At the Hut, we call tea “old-growth” when the trees are one hundred years old or more, and “ancient” when they get up near a thousand.

It is important to know that the size of the leaf does not help to determine whether the tea is old-

growth or not. Old trees still produce tiny, fresh buds, and small plantation trees also have large leaves. Tea trees in Yunnan are, after all, large-leaf varieties. This means that the trees are single-trunk with roots that grow downwards, unlike small-leaf varieties, which evolved as tea moved north (naturally or carried by man), and have several trunks with roots that grow outwards. Why the two categories are called “small-leaf” and “large-leaf” is because the leaves that are allowed to grow to maturity on the trees will be very different in size. In other words, you can pick small buds from either, but if the leaves are left on the tree the large-leaf trees will produce much larger leaves, which can be bigger than a person’s hand. The issue is complicated, however, by certain so-called “dancing” varieties of large-leaf tea in Yunnan that branch right above ground into several trunks. It is also complicated by the fact that some farmers

pollard their large-leaf trees. Pollarding involves cutting the trunk so it produces more trunks and then, the idea is, more leaves. There is, however, some research that shows that this method doesn’t really increase yield. Pollarding is obviously not the healthiest option for the trees. It is also done sometimes to make picking more convenient, but we would choose to refer to that as “pruning” to differentiate it from pollarding.

Another way to categorize large-leaf tea is to call it “*chou mu*,” which means there is a single trunk that grows up about a meter before branching. Though there are varieties of large-leaf tea trees that branch lower down, there is still always a thick trunk, so the distinction can be useful. Small-leaf tea branches immediately, like a bush, with no visible trunk of any kind. (Again, the “dancing” varieties of large-leaf tea trees are an exception, though their trunks are still thick underground.)



抹茶

Maocha

The term “maocha” is used frequently throughout these pages. “Maocha” literally means “rough tea.” Nowadays, it is most often used in discussions of puerh tea, but it actually refers to any unfinished tea produced at farm. With puerh, this means the loose-leaf sheng was sent to the producer/factory is finished in one of four ways: 1) packaged and then sold as blended/single-region loose-leaf puerh; 2) compressed and sold as single-region sheng; 3) blended with other maocha, then compressed and sold as a sheng cake; or 4) piled to become shou, then compressed and sold as a shou cake. Traditionally, oolong tea was not roasted by farmers but by shop owners, who were master roasters, and therefore bought maocha from farmers and roasted it to their customers’ tastes. This is all complicated by the fact that these days, many farmers will finish their tea themselves, whether by compressing and packaging it in the case of puerh or roasting and packaging in the case of oolong. Some even sell it themselves, and own shops in the cities.

To determine the age of a large-leaf, *chou mu* tea tree, you have to look at the thickness of the trunk, not the height. Tea can grow tall very fast. Even in ten years, a tree can be several meters tall. You determine the age by the thickness of the trunk. The girth of the trunk is also relative to the varietal, but in general, real old-growth trees have thick trunks. If the trunk has a diameter of two hands, you can be sure it is more than a hundred years old, and certainly old-growth. Over time, as you see more trees, you will get better at determining their ages based on appearance alone.

But every shop owner in China who sells puerh has photos on his or her phone of genuine old-growth trees that he or she is happy to tell you are the very trees that his or her tea is made from. Sometimes, they even hang signs with their logos on the trees for the photo. This is very rarely genuine, however. Sadly, there is an ocean of plantation tea and

only a small stream of genuine old-growth tea. Learning to taste and feel the difference will be paramount in your tea journey; that and a good heart for Tea to find.

Kinds of Gardens

After the distinction between small- and large-leaf, it is important to understand the three kinds of tea gardens in Yunnan. Again, there is no standardization in this, so we have had to create our own. Different authors and vendors will describe and label these kinds of gardens in their own ways, but once you have a basic understanding of these three, you will be able to navigate the discussion. We call the three kinds of tea gardens: “plantation,” “eco-arboreal” and “forest.”

Plantation tea is grown in rows, with tea trees propagated by cuttings planted close together, usually in lower-altitude, more acces-

sible places, though plantation tea can be grown anywhere. The dangers of plantation tea are that this is where conventional farming is most predominant, which means the tea often is not organic and is grown industrially. As such, this tea is rarely as healthy for people and is most certainly worse for the environment. It also lacks sustainability. Such tea is not what we call “living tea.” Living tea has six characteristics. It is seed-propagated, as opposed to tea planted from cuttings. The tea trees have room to grow—upwards to produce large crowns, and between each individual tree as well, allowing the plants to organize themselves. Living tea is grown in full biodiversity, surrounded by natural ecology. It is, of course, grown without the use of any agrochemicals (the Terrible Trio: pesticides, herbicides and/or chemical fertilizers). The relationship between the farmer and trees is one of respect and reverence.

Within the character for “Tea” is the radical “human,” as Tea is a relationship between Nature and human. Finally, no irrigation or fertilizer of any kind (even organic fertilizer) is used in living tea. This allows the trees to be independent, developing strong and deep roots connecting to the energy of the mountain.

The other issue with plantation tea as far as puerh goes is that it is missing much of what makes puerh tea unique. There is little by way of processing that distinguishes puerh (it undergoes a lower temperature/lighter de-enzyming, *sha qing*, and sun-drying, both of which contribute to fermentation). Puerh is instead characterized by the rich biodiversity of the forests of Yunnan, the glacial water that flows there from the top of the world (the Tibetan Plateau, which extends into northern Yunnan), the old tea trees that live longer and have deeper roots than almost all tea trees, changing the medicinal qualities of the tea there, and, of course, the rich aboriginal cultural and spiritual heritage surrounding puerh tea. But all of these factors are absent in plantation tea, which is produced from smaller, younger trees that are rarely growing in the forest, etc.

The second kind of garden, which we call “eco-arboreal,” is composed of living tea planted or growing wild near the edge of the village. These trees grow up in biodiversity and live in a healthy environment, but not in the forest. These trees are just outside the village and sometimes surrounded by other agriculture. These trees are more convenient to care for and harvest since the farmers do not have to hike to get to them. They are still quite happy and healthy, and as of now small Yunnanese villages aren't so bad to live just outside of, as many are still clean and in healthy balance with the environment. Not all eco-arboreal tea is clean, though. There is rarely ever any pesticide use with such tea, but some farmers do use weed-killers and/or chemical

fertilizers to increase yield. In areas where these trees are surrounded by other crops, they can also be cross-contaminated if local farmers are using agrochemicals on those plants.

The final kind of garden is a forest garden. These can be wild or planted by people. These are gardens in the forest, often protected parks. The tea grows naturally in a full and flourishing ecosystem. Obviously, this represents the best of what puerh tea has to offer. Sadly, almost every puerh vendor in the world gives the impression that all of his or her tea is of this variety, when very little of this kind of tea actually exists anymore. Many times, you could hike into the forest and pass right by such a garden if you didn't know what to look for, since the tea garden would look just like all the other jungle you had passed by on the way there. These natural, forest gardens are what, as the old saying goes, “bring Nature to society.”

Getting to know these kinds of tea and learning how to tell if the tea is really old-growth and what kind of garden it comes from is helpful, but also remember that in this tradition, we have a saying: “As the person seeks the Leaf, the Leaf seeks the person.” What kind of tea finds us will have to do with our approach to Tea, our relationship to the Leaf and how we serve it to others as well. Our heart will guide us to the right teas, just as the right teas will find the people with heart. When you respect Tea as medicine, and are committed to protecting the aboriginal culture and environment in which old-growth forest tea grows, such tea will find you.

Tea of the Month

Forest Song is an amazing sheng puerh. It comes from eco-arboreal gardens, which are a great compromise to the world's need for more tea. The energy of the Big Snow Mountain region itself is amazing,

with jungle forests and great snowy peaks above. The openness of these mountains is in the tea. When you drink it, you will understand. It has a very open quality. These days, it is tricky finding clean living tea in Yunnan since some dishonest farmers will switch the tea. However, this tea comes from a very reliable source. If that wasn't enough, though, we had the tea lab-tested just to be sure and it came back as chemical-free.

The tea from Big Snow Mountain is always very smooth and pleasant to drink, even when it is young. The energy is pure and bright. This was one of the best *maocha* (rough tea) that we tasted



this year and was at the top of our list of choices for Light Meets Life cakes, but we had already spent this year's budget for sheng on teas from places we visited on our trip to Jingmai and Ai Lao Mountain. This tea was hand-picked and processed by the Wa aboriginal tribe.

The Lincang region is the northernmost of the three major tea areas in Yunnan. It is also the birthplace of all tea. The forests there have the oldest trees, and deepest roots in Cha Dao. There is some disagreement amongst scholars as to the origin of tea, but in traveling to the three major areas of Yunnan, we have found that the Lincang region is the home of all tea. We especially

feel this in the "Five Mountains." Our understanding, however, is based more on a feeling, a connection and affinity to Tea and Her spirit than on any linear proof—take it or leave it... The five mountains from which all tea originated are Ming Feng (鳴風), Mang Fei (忙肺), Mei Zi Qing (梅子菁), Wu Jia Zhai (武家寨) and the home of our Tea of the Month, Da Xue Shan (大雪山).

We find the liquor of this month's tea ethereal beyond description. The color is perfectly white and golden, shining brightly in any light. It is both light and deep, uplifting and centering. It is crisp and clean and tastes like wind, but

it has the strength of young puerh as well, which means it will go the distance. It is cleansing, purifying you like a late summer breeze that breaks a heat spell and calms the soul. We find it both calming and invigorating throughout a session. It is yin, but in a very balanced way.

This is an eco-arboreal garden on Big Snow Mt., where our Tea of the Month comes from. The garden is very healthy, indeed. The trees are strong, surrounded by biodiversity and are chemical-free.



Forest Song

This month, instead of sharing what our guests felt about this special tea, we asked Wu De to drink it and write some songs of the forest to share with us all. Next month, we'll return to our guests' impressions of the tea, but for now, poetry and music can sing of the forest better than any description of one's experience drinking the tea!

茶 *The conductor taps the bowls together:
Hush...
Lid clinking, tinkling shards
Pouring, slushing
Drip, drip, drip
Plunk, spin, plunk, spin
Slurp and ahhhhhh!*

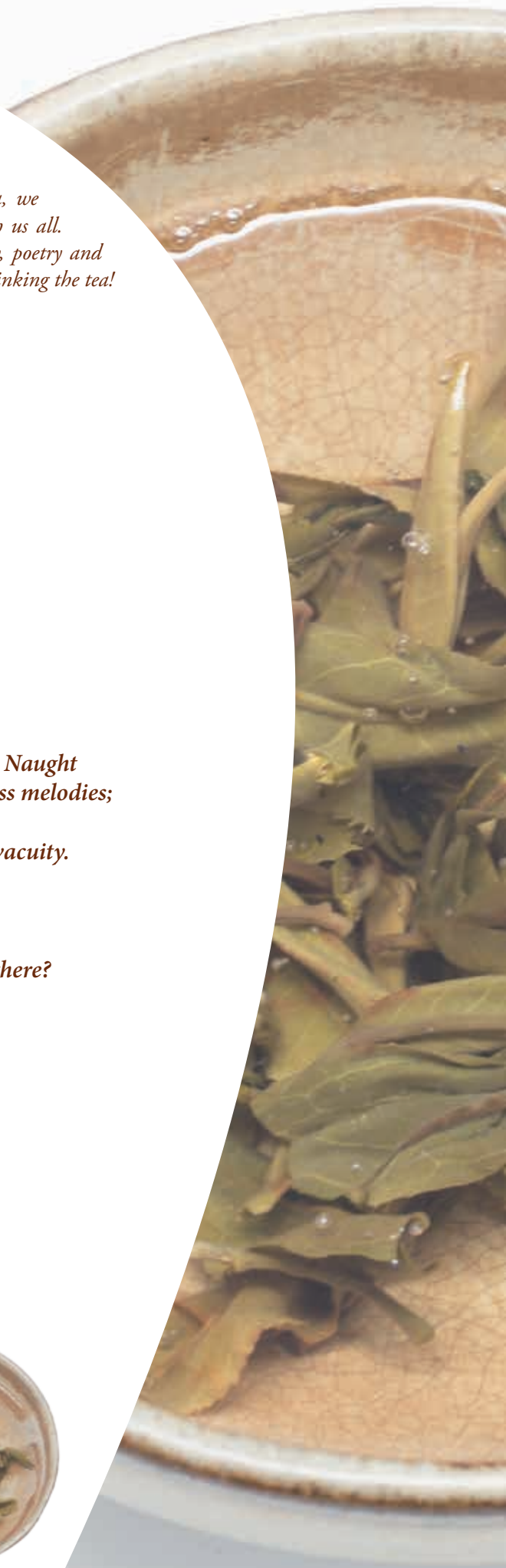
茶 *Forest Symphony
Conducted by None
And sung by the thousand-voiced Naught
To the accompaniment of stringless melodies;
Resounding hollow beats
Pound through vast meadows of vacuity.
Ending in a crescendo of silence,
The invisible audience cheers
And raises empty bowls.
Is the song heard when none are there?*

茶 *We sat deep in the forest,
A circle encircled by trees,
One and all inspired by the song:
Slurp, slurp, slurp.*



*Check out the video
on brewing tips now!*

www.globalteahut.org/videos





Brewing Tips

There is no better way to end the summer than with some young sheng maocha directly in a bowl. In this way, you can also share this tea with many of your friends and loved ones, with just a few leaves in each bowl. Watching such beautiful green leaves open is one of the greatest joys of the tea lover.

As this is an issue on the relationship between sound and tea, we recommend brewing this tea outdoors in the park or indoors with music. Try to notice the sounds of the forest or music without labeling or evaluating. Just let the vibrations of the sound pass through you. Pay attention to the tea and see if you can feel how the tea is also changed by the sounds. If you drink the tea in silence, see if you can—some-where deep down—hear the forest sounds from where the tea came.

Of course, with such a tea as this, water will be of the utmost importance. Choosing nice spring water is essential to bringing out the best in a tea like this, even if it is purchased in a bottle. Be sure to use the best water you can find. Such a gentle sheng tea needs a fine water without flavor, full of minerals and smooth to bring out the best the tea has to offer you.

The energy of the water while it is boiling is also very sensitive to sound and you can practice becoming attuned to this even with just water. Try boiling one kettle in silence and then one with music and see what the difference is. The water will absorb the energy of the music and be changed by it. Hopefully, you will be able to notice this, as with the tea. This will help you know if and when to use music in your tea sessions and what kind of music to select when you choose to do so.

As the water is boiling, it is at its most sensitive, which is why the job of cha tong (water-bearer) is so important. At the time of boiling, as the water is finding its structure, it needs a calm presence tending it—with gentle, graceful movements and a kind yet peaceful, heart. In this way, the water is filled with positive energy while simultaneously left as undisturbed as possible as it finds its way to a sound and smooth structure.

THE HEART OF TEA

MUSIC & SILENCE IN CHAXI

茶人: Wu De

茶的精髓



The first step in deciding what music to play at a tea session is choosing whether to have any music at all. For many sessions, silence is going to be the best option after all. Sometimes, it may seem like explorations into the minutiae of arranging a chaxi and preparing tea are too much fuss over small matters, but in this article, Wu De clarifies why the details are important and why we should care.



When I traveled to New Zealand last year, Sam took me to the Shire. Walking around and looking at the permanent set of Sir Peter Jackson's movies was a real treat, as I love the books and movies very much. I was blown away by the attention to detail, care and passion that went into the creation of Hobbiton, especially since some of the sets would have only been backgrounds for a matter of seconds in the film, and much of the detail was far beyond what anyone could notice as the film rolls. The guide told us that Sir Peter Jackson hired people to come there every day for more than a year before shooting and walk down the village trails so that they would appear well-worn, as if hobbits really lived there. Being a teacher, I used it as an opportunity to talk to Sam about how the focus on such details is very much in the spirit of Tea art as well. Around the Center, I always teach that students should focus on the details, and let the big things take care of themselves.

When we clean the Center every Monday, we leave no stone unturned. "Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning," my teacher always said. The idea is not to clean only where the guests see, but everywhere. The idea is that in truth—in the absolute sense—the space is clean or it isn't and you cannot fool the world or yourself about that. When tea is your practice, the details matter. They matter because it is your practice and your passion. And where you invest your love, you invest your life, so it is also your

life's work, literally. The attention to detail in cleaning and arranging the stage for tea aren't for the sake of show, in other words—not when you are spiritually and wholly invested in the performance of the tea session. There are two reasons why even the most minute details matter.

First and foremost, we have to understand that there is a personal investment in sharing tea when it is your practice. Cha Dao means "the Way of Tea." Like many things, the term has become watered-down in modern times to mean "brewing methods." But it really is self-cultivation through tea—living a life of tea. There are two verbs for doing a thing with commitment in one's life/career: you *make* cabinets or you *are* a cabinet-maker. They aren't the same thing. You can *make* cabinets for all kinds of reasons—for money, as an hourly job, etc. But if you apprentice with someone who *is* a cabinet-maker, you will find, most definitely, that included in their art is a) an approach to how to live a human life, and b) an approach to the world in which that life is lived. When you put yourself in a practice completely, you become it. Art was not a hobby for Van Gogh or Michelangelo. Music was not a pastime for Beethoven or Bach. *It was everything.* It was a way of life, not just a hobby or even a career. They lived it, in other words. Similarly, Sir Peter Jackson and the other artists who made these movies put so much time, energy and soul into them because it was their very life, their Dao and Way of living,

愛茶者和道大師，李合春，彈古琴于青羊宮，中國成都四川。照片源於馬修倫敦未出版之書，“茶魂 - 寄與愛茶者”

Tea lover and Daoist Master Li Hechun playing the Qin at the Chingyang Gong (Green Ram Abbey), Chengdu, Sichuan, China

*Photograph by Matthew London from his forthcoming book
"The Spirit of Tea: An Offering to Tea Lovers"
www.spiritoftea.net*



and hopefully, an art form before a means to earn a living. It doesn't matter what moviegoers will and will not notice. The artists will know and the camera will know. They are investing all of themselves into their craft for their own sakes, and for the sake of the art itself. Above my bed, I have calligraphy that reads: "In every breath, in every step, from the moment I wake till the moment I sleep, I am preparing tea." And so the first reason we devote ourselves to every detail is that the practice then becomes us. It is done for the sake of our self-cultivation, in other words. We let nothing slide, as if this is our last-ever tea session—as it very well may be.

The second reason every detail counts is that in our tradition we do not learn how to *make* tea, but how to *serve* tea. The more energy we put into cleaning, preparing the space, decorating and arranging our *chaxi*

and then learning/practicing the skills that will allow us to brew the tea properly, the more we honor our guests. They needn't notice all that has gone into their cups to feel the love in them. It still fills the heart. Around the holidays, I remember, my grandmother, mother and sister would devote two whole days to making a huge meal that would essentially be eaten in thirty minutes to an hour. And some of the guests would not, nor could they know how much time and effort had gone into even small details like decorating the cake. But the energy of love was felt by all—to the extent that guests who were ordinarily involved in family feuds or arguments would naturally set them aside on that day and instead be smiling, chatting and hugging one another, perhaps without even knowing why—oblivious to the fact that they had been so angry at one another just a week

ago that they weren't speaking, and might be so again the following week.

Thus, the true performing artist will invest her entire being, heart and soul, no matter what it takes, into perfecting every detail of the stage and the performance. They do this because this is their Dao, their way of life and their being. They also do it out of love for the audience. As Chajin, our stage is our *chaxi*. We clean and arrange it in as much detail as we can muster, counting every little thing as a communication our guests could notice, whether they eventually do or not. We do this to demonstrate our love for and service to them and also for our own sakes, as a vehicle to better ourselves and improving our understanding of Tea, Nature and Dao. In essence, there are three aspects of Tea as a Dao: 1) *Setting the stage*, which includes cleaning, preparing,



recognizing every detail as a possible communication between you and your guests on the theme/spirit of the event. 2) *The internal preparation*, which includes both your spiritual availability to your guests—the heart-mind you have cultivated—and your brewing skills. As I often say, each cup I offer you has really taken me more than twenty years to prepare. 3) Finally, then, there is *the performance itself*. This is where all the details come together: the *chaxi*, the teaware and tea, coals and water, the meditation and preparation, and your brewing skills, are all there to honor the guests. How deeply they drink of it all will depend on their own affinity to Tea, as well as the training they have received. Will they notice the subtlest communications that are but hints way off to the left? Did you notice how well-worn the trails were in Hobbiton when you watched the film? Maybe

you did, maybe subconsciously. Or maybe each little detail was woven together to form a tapestry of the scene that convinced you that you were there, that it was lifelike and real. Maybe all the small details conveyed a bigger truth, in other words. The same is true of tea sessions.

Some guests who know tea, like a master weaver who knows tapestry, will see the details of different aspects of the *chaxi* and the brewing performance and appreciate them, like another cook may notice that the icing my sister made is hand-whipped and appreciate the cake all the more, or a fellow film producer may notice the little hand-labeled bottles in the windows of hobbit holes and appreciate how much work went into it all. Others walk away with an overall feeling of being honored. They know that a lot went into hosting them for tea, and this contributes to their experience.

Whether or not you know that the stage took ten hours to set up, that there were dozens of sound checks, or that the band rehearsed for hours and hours every day for months to get ready for the tour—your recognition will depend on your previous experience helping in such performances—but whether you notice the details or not, you will walk away transformed by the concert, a changed woman! And it is impossible to say whether that would happen if any single detail were missing. We don't miss anything because it is our practice not to, and because all that love and devotion adds up to a full bowl of tea and a more glorious *chaxi*. Our guests will know that our hearts were in the cleaning, preparation, decoration and arrangement, as well as the brewing as we serve them tea with all our heart and soul, because we love them. And because we are Chajin.

First There Is Music

You may wonder where this all is heading and what it has to do with Tea, music and silence. Well, when we begin practicing *chaxi*, we focus on the teapot, tea pillow and tea runner, and so on. But as we progress from the gross to the subtle, as in any practice or path, we begin to see that the whole environment is our *chaxi*. It is not just the lights and decorations that make a show—there are costumes, smoke, small decorative details, and, yes, the background music. Such details can be honed down quite distinctly, like, for example, recognizing that there is not just a color coordination between the tea cloth and teaware/utensils, but also with the color of the shirt of the brewer (or shirt and pants/dress if he or she is sitting on the ground). Deciding on the background music may not have passed through your mind previously as an element of your *chaxi*, subject to the same principles you use to arrange your session, but I hope that it will from now on.

The most important question when it comes to choosing music is whether or not to have any at all. As we have often said in these pages, there are rarely any neutral elements in art. And simplicity should be your most treasured tool. Always start with emptiness and build upon the empty stage, recognizing that if any detail, any element isn't enhancing your piece, then it is most likely detracting from what you are trying to communicate. Each aspect of a *chaxi* should be communicating something. When they were building Hobbiton, the guide told us, each little detail of the set had a story—a story that the viewer would never hear, like that the gardeners' tools were so worn because they had been passed down generations. Just so, we should know why everything is as it is in our *chaxi*. *Make every detail intentional.*

There is no formula for the way things should be arranged for tea.

People often rebel against tradition, feeling like tea brewing is personal. And it is. But that doesn't mean we don't need tradition, teachers or guidance. We do. We want to learn because this is our love, and our Way of life. We naturally want to be better. In photography, there are elements that make up a proper exposure. Learning them is essential. But then you realize that the "proper" exposure is only correct depending on what kind of photograph you are trying to make. There is nothing wrong with "over-" or "under-exposing" if that is what you are trying to communicate in the photograph, in which case it *is* correct, not "over" or "under" anything. But it has to be intentional. Understanding how to get a "correct" exposure in the ordinary sense is important, however, and to do so you will need a teacher, tradition, experience and practice. The idea is that there is no correct way to arrange a *chaxi*, only what

is correct for a certain occasion. But make sure every aspect of every detail is exactly where it is *intentionally*. This will be your practice. Also, each detail is a voice—a non-verbal communication to your guests about the fact that you love them and welcome them, and also about all the other thematic elements you are trying to communicate in your gathering.

And so, what I am saying is that we should always start with silence before selecting music. Is music really necessary? Will it help you to honor your guests? Will it facilitate the spirit of the gathering? If guests are coming over for a conversation, perhaps to catch up because we haven't seen one another for a long time, then playing music will be in the way. It won't be in harmony with the purpose of the gathering and with what I am trying to communicate nonverbally to my guests, which is, amongst whatever other



specifics may surround these individuals and the nature of our gathering, to create a warm, welcoming heart-space to have a good chat in.

Then There is Silence

Those of you who have visited the Center will know that our morning tea sessions are often accompanied by music. This may give you the wrong idea: that music and tea should always go together. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* The reason that we often have music during tea at the Center is because there is already plenty of silent space here. Guests and residents meditate every morning and evening for one hour. In the mornings, after meditation, breakfast is also silent. This means that we have an hour of silent meditation followed by a silent breakfast before tea

even begins, which is why it is nice to have some quiet music playing in the background to accompany tea. If there weren't enough quiet space at the Center, we'd have many more silent sessions than we do.

It is rare that I choose music when serving tea in my courses or ceremonies as I travel. Most people do not have enough quiet space in their lives, and settling down to focus on tea is the goal of my service. Music can distract from the tea, after all, just as the tea can distract from the music. I really only choose to play music when I am out if I feel like my guests will be very distracted and find it difficult to rest in stillness. Sometimes, certain guests come from busier lifestyles and are therefore uncomfortable with silent space. This can be okay, but we don't want to push too hard. Tea is a gentle path. In such cases, some quiet music can help to pacify the room and ease such guests into

the tea. We always want to create a comfortable heart-space for our guests, which is the determining factor in using music in our *chaxi*.

Since music can be so powerful, it is always helpful to choose music without lyrics. It is a rare session indeed when we choose music with lyrics, which often distracts guests from the tea. A rare afternoon session of the casual variety with friends may benefit from some Van the Man, though. More often than not, you will want to choose music that is soft and without words.

When you don't have any music, the space itself becomes your symphony. Especially when outdoors, one should never choose music with tea (unless it is a special rare tea event with live music). Remember, no space is ever really completely silent. There is always a vibrant soundscape around us. And as the tea heightens our senses, we can use the ambient sounds meditatively.



Try listening to the softest sounds around you and refrain from labeling or evaluating them. Do not attempt to identify what they are and whether you find them pleasant or not. Let them instead remain as sound waves passing through you. Bowl by bowl, you will find that you hear softer and more distant sounds and that it all is within you, a part of the session. Then let go, and rest in the quiet and peace of the tea.

Then There Is Music

Like every aspect of *chaxi*, music should be used sparingly, and only when it promotes an appreciation of the tea, which is why we are gathered at a tea session. Every element of your *chaxi* should be intentionally used, with a clear understanding of its function and what you are trying to communicate to your guests. We favor simplicity in *chaxi*, preferring emptiness to clutter and silence to music. There is enough filling in the world and too little emptying. Tea provides the space to facilitate anything we need to be healthy. There is no formula for how we create the space for the session to unfold, but everything in it should communicate that purpose. If you aren't sure, always lean towards clean and pure, which in this case means silence. When you don't know whether or not to use music or which music to choose, always choose silence. The subject of a good *chaxi* is *always* the tea. Nothing should distract from that—all lines should lead towards it, highlighting and enhancing the tea.

After sitting in an empty space, we start to add small details to our *chaxi* based on our theme, which always starts with honoring the guests and ends with the specifics of the occasion. We assume that nothing is neutral, and add elements slowly, paying attention to how they balance and harmonize with other elements. Try to include every aspect of the environment. The best

tea rooms are free of all distractions. Unfortunately, the small size of our Center means that there is a lot of tea in our Main Tea Hall, which can be nice—sitting around all the energy of Tea—but is also distracting. Light Meets Life will have many plain tea rooms to practice in, which makes creating a theme for a tea gathering so much easier. In this way, also choose your music carefully and make a serious commitment to do so. Once again, if you have any doubts, go with silence. Let the occasion determine whether it will benefit from some music, silence or maybe even conversation. If the latter, it is still beneficial to start with a bowl or three of silence before talking, which calms everyone down and helps facilitate real communication—from the heart and from a presence founded in the moment.

Stillness is the real music of Tea. Music that moves the tea energy in us should move it towards deeper stillness, contributing to the transformative power of the tea space.



“Stillness is the real music of Tea. Music that moves the tea energy in and through us should take it towards deeper stillness, enhancing the transformative power of a tea ceremony.”

沉默的聲音





CREATIVITEA

THE ART OF TEA & MUSIC

茶人: Alec Bridges / Photography by Mikki Sage

It is great to finally be reading an article by the person responsible for the soundtracks to so many of our videos! Tea has been instrumental to the creative process of sages for millenia. As a brilliant singer and songwriter, as well as a Chajin, Alec has a unique perspective on the role Tea can play in creativity. For most of us, a discussion of Tea and music is about what music we listen to as we drink tea, but for Alec, tea-drinking also informs the music he creates.

Why drink Tea?
by listen to music?

There are many reasons, really. Some people drink tea for the taste, others for the beauty of the ceremony. Some people drink tea to connect with friends and community, while others wish to feel more at one with Nature. And some drink tea because it enhances their meditation practice, and some simply because they are thirsty and tea is within reach. There is no reason that is more right. They are all good. For whatever reason people drink tea, ultimately it is because it makes them feel a particular way. As we get to know tea better, it becomes apparent that tea has great depth and is capable of making one feel good in many ways, ranging from the simple satisfaction of sipping a warm, tasty beverage to a feeling of being deeply tranquil, connected and at peace. Music is similar in this regard. With so many sounds, instruments, voices, and ways in which to make them sing, the possibilities are infinite,

yet again it all boils down to how it makes you feel, with no approach being right or wrong. Like tea, the range of feelings evoked is vast, from potential for pure sensory enjoyment to real depth and connection.

Both tea and music make us feel a certain way, and thus bring us to a certain state of mind. I suppose this could be said about anything, but during a tea session these two things are very immediate, very deep, and they both connect the server with the receiver in the moment of service. Whether you are on the serving end or the receiving end, the potential for increased mindfulness and depth of being is undeniable. I find the act of serving tea and creating music strikingly similar. Both require much preparation that boils down to one moment of openness and connection to the Dao, the Universe, Buddha Nature, God, the Flying Spaghetti Monster or whatever you personally believe in. Through this connection, you set yourself to the side and become a bridge to those who are on the

receiving end. As a receiver, I find that however much presence and mindfulness you bring to either Tea or music is how much you get back. There is no music without a listener, as there are no constellations without humans to project images upon the stars. Without our minds to play connect-the-dots, melodies are merely unconnected sounds, each vanishing before the next arises in a new moment. Our presence is what gives music life and meaning. When both the server and the receiver are fully present together in a moment, that is when real magic occurs. And what better tool to become more fully present with than an old puerh or oolong, brewed with great mindfulness, skill and heart?

There have been so many occasions when, through centering myself with a meditative tea ceremony, I have gotten into the right mindset for enhanced creativity. Many of the songs I have written have been born in this way. Tea definitely helps in the creative process, and has for centuries.

音樂



Living in a busy city with the increased responsibilities that come with age—be they school, work, family, or all of the above—has a way of orienting the heart-mind in a less than ideal direction for creativity. Tea has greatly helped me to ease into the more fertile side of mind, and in a very enjoyable way. Bowl by bowl, the to-do list gradually fades away and becomes more of a to-be list, and my mind becomes more present for such things as writing music or lyrics-poetry. Not only that, but the quality of the songs I write after drinking tea is more in line with what I have strived towards for most of my songwriting life. Don't get me wrong—I love a good silly song to dance to or an intense song to shake my fists to, but my ultimate aim in writing music is to reflect Truth as best I can, and to inspire others to seek Truth as well. I find this much easier after a good session of “Hui An” aged puerh.

The above relationship does not end with writing. More and more, I find myself taking the special top-shelf teas down from their lofty abodes before recording a song in hopes that their essence will come through my voice and guitar, into your ears. A good example is the song “Signs,” which you will find in your August Global Tea Hut album, *Music of the Hut Vol. I*. Tea has been with that song every step of the way. It started with just the intro riff, which came to me after a tea session. Then the first lyrics, “Down from the mountain, down in the valley, with the moon above me to light my way,” inspired by Wu De telling me to sing devotional music to the spirit of Nature Herself. The next step was sharing the song in its incomplete state with fellow songwriters over tea. Their reactions further inspired me to continue writing, which led to its completion, and, of course, involved more tea drinking. Then, before recording all of my parts, I sat down with my favorite teas and meditated before committing my voice and guitar



to tape. Could I have done this without Tea? I suppose it is possible, but there was an ease, naturalness and enjoyment throughout the whole process that has not always been the case when it comes to writing and recording a song. I also feel the spirit of Tea strongly in this song when I play or listen to it. I attribute all of this to Tea.

I say all of this not to talk about myself, but to share an experience with you to illustrate what Tea and music are capable of beyond the burly, sensual enjoyment of them, and to invite you to explore how drinking tea in this way can enhance whatever it is that you love to do. We have all heard Wu De say,

“a radish farmer points the Way with a radish and I point the Way with tea.” In this instance, I am “pointing the Way” with music because I am a musician! I therefore invite you to sit quietly with your favorite tea and see how it can transform whatever it is with which you “point the Way.”





徵 兆

Lyrics of "Signs," by Alec Bridges

Down from the mountain, down in the valley,
With the moon above me to light my way.
Dark magic night, with the smell of the pines,
No inner light to guide my way,
So I follow the sound of the stream until
I find something that feels right.

I look to the Sky, saying, "send me a sign,"
It says, "Open your eyes; don't be blind.
I've given you everything you'll ever need
to see right before your very eyes."
But you keep looking for a sign,
And you keep missing your life.
You could be holding your prize,
If you would only open your eyes.

Big beautiful world, wide as the sky,
Hidden behind filtered eyes,
Oh it's hiding behind the stories you tell
while you're looking for some kind of

meaning in your life.
But you keep looking for a sign,
And you keep missing your life.
You could be holding your prize,
If you would only open your eyes.

Waiting for the wind to whisper;
You hope it tells you everything
you need to hear.
Waiting for the wind to whisper,
But it can't tell you anything
you need to hear.
No,
Open your eyes.

You're waiting for the wind to whisper.
It can't tell you anything you need to hear.
No,
Open your eyes, you're alive right now.
Open your eyes.

THE GUQIN

ONE OF TEA'S OLDEST FRIENDS

茶人: Michelle Huang

The Guqin is one of the oldest and most mysterious instruments ever created, with a very similar transcendental quality to its sound as we find in the art and cultivation of tea. For centuries, the Qin has been played while people enjoyed fine tea. Even today, many tea gatherings are accompanied by Qin music. Michelle, our Chinese art historian, once again puts her brush to paper in order to explore the age-old friendship between these celestial arts.

The four favorite pastimes, or rather, the cultivated interests that any scholar in pre-modern China would enjoy are the *Qin* (Chinese zither), calligraphy, painting and *qi* (Chinese chess), and they were sometimes thought to be ranked in that order of nobility, as was the sophistication and loftiness of the one who appreciated each. Therefore, playing the *Qin* was actually much more than learning a musical instrument. But what stands beyond just playing the notes correctly? In this article, we'll explore some of the many cultural melodies that have resounded from the *Qin* into and throughout Chinese history for thousands of years up to the present, as the zither's haunting vibrations surely still echo through the old mountain crags and peaks.

Even though there is no record of this instrument in the most ancient Chinese classics, there are several stories about how different legendary sages invented the *Qin* more than four thousand years ago. The insistence on a relationship between the *Qin* and the earliest

saints and rulers shows the importance of *Qin* in Chinese history. Tea was similarly fastened to the ancients' hagiography as a testament to the Chinese reverence for the Leaf.

The earliest written record of the *Qin* is found in the *Book of Poetry*, which was collated between the eleventh and fifth centuries B.C.E. From that time, the "masters of the *Qin*" were granted titles in all the feudal lords' courts. Even the most famous philosopher and educator, Confucius, studied the *Qin* with a master, in part to learn how to recite poetry properly, as Chinese poetry is often recited to music. At that time, string and percussion music was performed during court rituals exclusively, and was very different from the brass music which was performed during funerals. Therefore, the *Qin* is loaded with symbolism regarding cosmology, ethics and propriety: the five strings symbolize the five elements, while a seven-string *Qin* symbolizes the five elements plus the king and the officials; the thirteen frets symbolize the

lunar calendar, or the solar months with the king at the center; and the three ways of plucking the strings symbolize the perfect harmony of Heaven, Earth and human beings. The *Qin* was regarded as a very serious practice; it was never intended to entertain others or relax oneself. It was, instead, viewed as a means of self-cultivation, a Dao. And that is where it meets Tea, since Tea was also viewed thus for thousands of years before it was ever recreationalized. Though both the *Qin* and Tea have fallen into the hands of enjoyment and casual use, we shouldn't forget their sacred heritage.

During the time between the third and the sixth centuries C.E., there were constant wars and China broke into several small, independent kingdoms ruled by nomads. Throughout this chaotic period, officials and powerful families had to flee their luxurious mansions to survive. It was at that difficult time that the literati who had lost their official positions and the comfort of city life turned to playing the *Qin* in reminiscence of their glory days.

聽琴圖

吟徵調商竈下桐
松間疑有入松風
仰窺低竈含情竅
以聽無絃一弄才

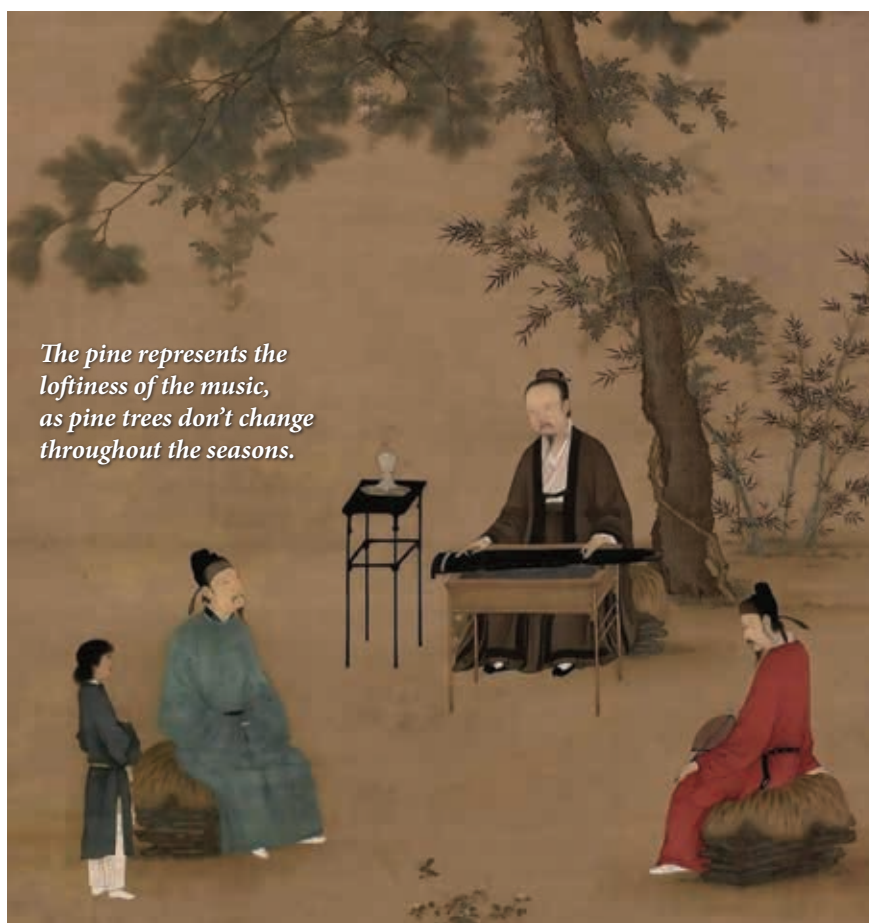
臣永謹題



The loyal literati preferred to sequester themselves in remote mountainous areas to practice self-cultivation rather than serve foreign kings. This was in harmony with the predominant Daoist philosophy of service to one's country and lord when needed and spiritual cultivation when one wasn't needed. As a result, playing the *Qin* was more and more regarded as an aspect of the holy man's life in the mountains—lofty, erudite and a symbol of integrity. A new dimension was added to *Qin* music during this unfortunate period of turmoil. Rather than playing the proper, elegant music of political rituals, these musicians found the expression of Nature, Daoist principles and spirit in the strings of the *Qin*, as well as a bitter-sweet catharsis in the sad music that expressed their displaced hearts.

Then we come to the lively and free-spirited Tang Dynasty (618-907), when all things artistic flourished as never before. The most popular activities at literary and political gatherings were composing poetry, drinking tea, and playing the *Qin*. This might remind Western readers of Mozart playing the violin for aristocrats all over Europe during the eighteenth century. For the European aristocrats and commoners alike, most of Mozart's music was pure entertainment. Playing music was not necessarily a symbol of cultivation, nor did all gentlemen know how to play the violin or piano. Though the aristocratic parties may evoke such an analogy, in China, the *Qin* was ever and always a form of high art that could only be played well by peaceful, tranquil, well-educated and well-disciplined sages. Perhaps Mozart's requiems would be a more apt analogy if they too had been played at small gatherings where the listeners had approached the experience with the reverence they would have had in church.

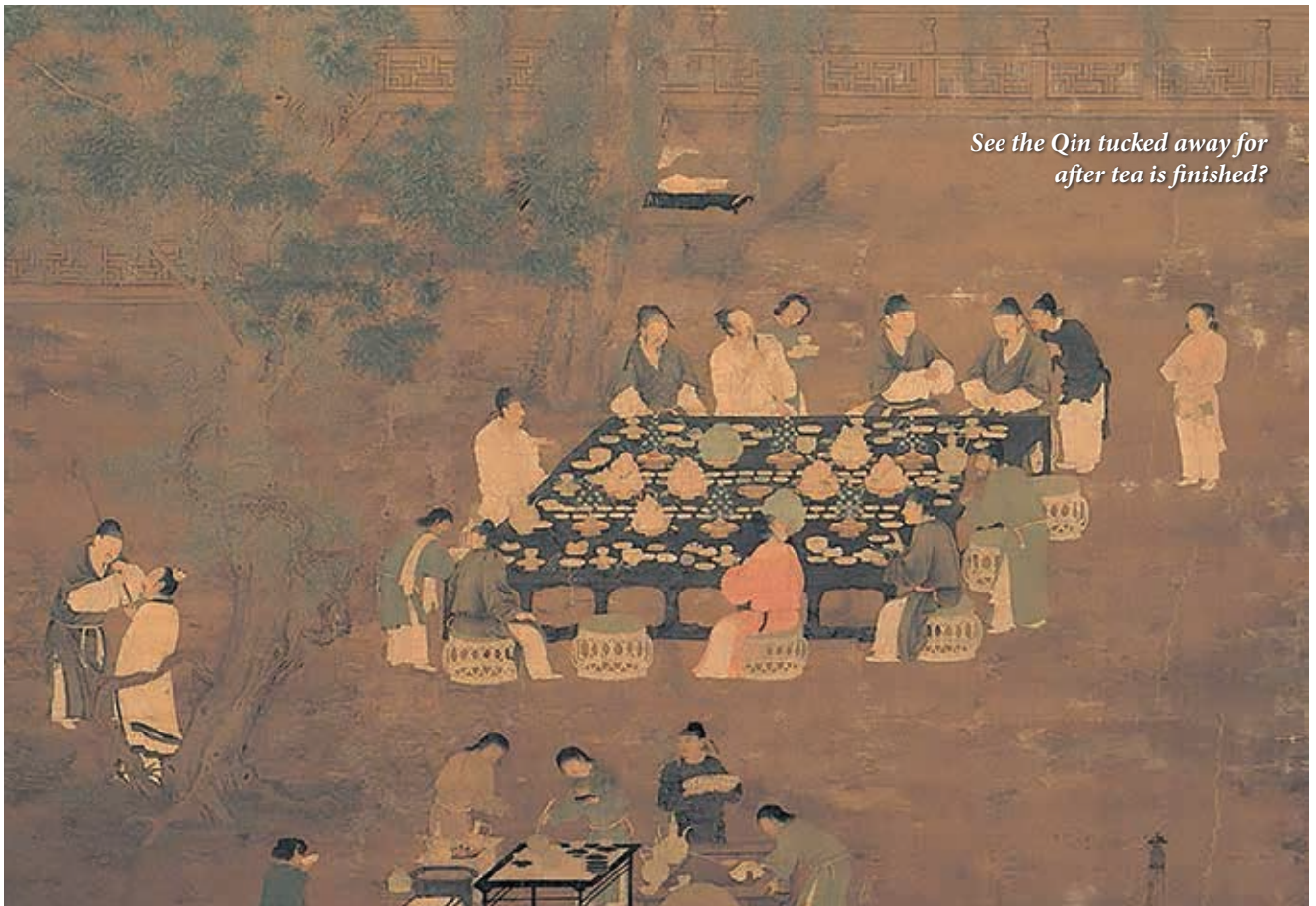
One of the reason why the *Qin* never made its way into popular entertainment is that the sound of the *Qin* is neither vibrant nor



loud enough. As a result, most *Qin* music is relatively slow and solemn. In other words, one needs to be very concentrated and well-composed (no pun intended), to practice something that is so soft and calming for long periods of time. By the same token, it takes a tranquil and settled mind to appreciate this kind of slow, ethereal and quiet music. You cannot talk or laugh during a *Qin* performance. It settles the heart and calms the mind, much like a fine cup of tea. The *Qin* transcended the social milieu, pushing aristocratic gatherings into a spiritual space. As testament to the *Qin's* place beyond social mores, the *Qin* was not just played by men in that era, but women could also cultivate a *Qin* practice in their leisure time. In the eighth century, the court official and painter, Zhou Fang, brushed a delightful painting of several lavishly dressed ladies enjoying elegant *Qin* music while sipping tea in their beautiful garden. The *Qin* clearly transcended such boundaries.

As an acquired taste, it is no surprise that the *Qin* was mostly popularized in elite literati circles and seldom made its way to the general public. It remained the instrument of the spirit, carried by Daoist mendicants from peak to peak and only understood in the city (if at all) by those educated enough to at least look out longingly and with a poetic heart at the mountains the sages cloudwalked. When a group of elites had an outing to drink tea at their favorite sites in the mountains or by creeks, someone would invariably bring a *Qin* to share soothing music while enjoying fine tea in a lovely environment. In those days, tea was very often enjoyed in Nature, as people had the luxury to do so. This is something we, in this age, need to learn from. The loss of our glorious Nature is a sadness the modern *Qin* master might lament in song.

The *Qin* has always been played by sages and sensitive beings, not performed by musicians. It is not that aristocrats would not listen to



musicians, even on outings, but rather that the *Qin* was never used to entertain friends or to excite and energize a crowd. You don't party with the *Qin*, in other words. The *Qin* was an alternative way to share a subdued and cultivated sentiment of joy amongst friends, enchanting and eliciting the Nature around them, expressing deep profundity and capturing more than what words can convey in heart-to-heart messages. In that way, the *Qin* shares this all with tea, which was very often drunk in the same spirit. Tea, also, can convey that which is beyond words, as it, too, can be a means to cultivate one's spirit and express one's insights to others. If one is emotionally balanced and disciplined, then there is no need to relax, as one is always in a state of grace and peace—a peace that can be shared with others, which is the true spirit of Tea and of the *Qin*, alike.

Entertainment in those days meant taking turns composing

poems and drinking wine and other kinds of music and mirth. To be sure, poetry brought delight and tears of joy to even the most serious politicians, but they need not have taken the trouble to hike a long way to a remote place to look for entertainment that they could have pursued in the comfort of their homes. Serious poets, painters, calligraphers, Tea and *Qin* masters sought the mountains for communion with Nature, and because their art was both a means of cultivation and an expression of it.

After the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Confucianism reclaimed its preeminence at court and literati culture evolved to a pinnacle, epitomized in Chinese history. Consequently, the zeitgeist of Song Dynasty art is delicate and minimalist in its ideal, yet intricate in concept. The *Qin* fit in with this aesthetic, symbolizing the essence of high art: the sound of the *Qin* is delicate, solo and minimalistic, and yet the composition of the music can

be complicated and sophisticated with profound implications. Even though the sound the *Qin* makes can be perceived as simple, it is compensated for by an elaborate and complex arrangement of notes. This aesthetic, mastered during the Song, is the first level of beauty expressed by the *Qin*, which is the harmony between the tangible (sound) and the intangible (composition/spirit). To the Chinese, these elements were not contradictory at all. On the contrary, they were viewed as yin and yang, complementing each other to make this art form complete, exquisite and perfect. If both the sound and the spirit were simple, then the music would be boring. However, the combination of a refined timbre and elaborate melody with simple sounds creates the most aesthetically pleasing balance between two seemingly opposite elements.

The leading poet/calligrapher/painter/official/scholar/sage/and, yes, *Qin* master in the Northern Song Dynasty, Su Dongpo,

wrote a short and seemingly simple poem on the *Qin* which helps capture some of the spiritual sentiment that has over time accrued to this majestic instrument: “If the sound is from the *Qin*, then why is it quiet inside its case? And if the sound is from the tips of the fingers, then why don’t we hear the fingers alone?” Su points out that the music does not exist in either the strings/instrument nor the fingers/master. To phrase it differently, it is the combination of the perfect touch of the fingers in the correct positions on the strings for the precise duration of time that creates a transcendent melody. In the same vein, the instrument itself is but wood and strings of silk, though not all *Qins* are created equally—there are superior and inferior ones. Likewise, not all people who practice the *Qin* can reach the same proficiency in playing.

Like tea, every fine, infinitely subtle element in the quality of the instrument and any minute difference in the fingers and maneuvers all tremendously affects the quality of the performance. Also like tea, the most important element in mastery of the *Qin* is the mental state of the player, which is not visible but audible. It requires a tranquil, still, patient and disciplined mind to master the *Qin*, as does tea preparation. Furthermore, even a skilled player with a good technique will reveal the slightest emotional unbalance in a performance. This is also why tea was served in Zen monasteries, as a naked representation of the heart-mind that cannot be covered with masks, but reveals the true level of one’s cultivation.

Su Dongpo, the greatest of the literati of the Northern Song Dynasty, pointed out a philosophical issue in art/aesthetics with this simple poem. By making readers realize that the visible elements are not all that counts in music, they are forced to ponder the essential factor in music, which is the personality/psyche of the player. At this point,

we see the second layer of beauty in the *Qin*, which is the fusion of the instrument and the player, i.e., the visible (the quality of the *Qin* and the technique of the player) and the audible (the player’s emotional state). It is the perfect union of instrument and player that moves and soothes people.

The last emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty, Huizong, was such a connoisseur of almost all forms of art that he lost the Chinese empire to a nomad from the north! Many of you will remember that we devoted the whole of April’s issue of *Global Tea Hut* to this marvelous man, including an annotated translation of his *Treatise on Tea*. Due to Huizong’s fervent love for art, he made painters officials at court, founded a royal studio for making *Qin*, founded several royal kilns, invented his own idiosyncratic style of calligraphy, wrote about tea, and much more. As you can see, in the Song Dynasty, even the emperor was more than simply an ardent art aficionado, but a true artist himself, and in many disciplines no less. One of the reasons why the ancients were so skilled in so many areas was that they understood the essence of art itself, which translated and transmitted mastery quite fluently from one discipline to the next. They understood that mastery of the self was the essence of art—that spiritual cultivation was the soul of an artistic life, both informing and refining discipline in any art form, from poetry to tea to the *Qin*.

Once a master has attained a certain level of concentration, internal harmony and spirit, it is relatively easy for her to master skills in different arenas, be it calligraphy, painting, tea or *Qin*-playing. Emperor Huizong painted a portrait of a gentleman playing the *Qin* under a pine tree while two officials sitting on rocks listen to the lofty music. The loftiness is signified by the pine tree, which does not wither even in harsh, freezing winter. Another painting by this artistic emperor

depicts a lavish tea party for scholars with many snacks and servants. Tucked in the upper left side under some tall trees is a *Qin* waiting to be played after the feast. It is apparent that the gentlemen enjoyed playing the *Qin* after a relaxing tea party. (Both of these paintings were also printed in April’s issue.)

As the poet Su Dongpo pointed out, the essence of *Qin* music lies neither in the instrument nor in the player’s fingers. It is, rather, the perfect harmony of both that makes *Qin* music so exquisite. In the same way, fine tea is not just good tea leaves nor good water alone; it is the perfect combination of the tea leaves and water that makes brewing tea such an art. There is much more beyond the teaware and tea. Su’s poem could be quite aptly applied to dry tea leaves, which will not produce fine liquor on their own, and to the water that is yet to be infused. It is through the subtle meeting of the two, which itself happens physically and spiritually, that the tea is made. The *Qin* and tea are equally mystical in their alchemy, to which Su’s poem alludes. When it comes to deciding on the right tea for a gathering and making minute adjustments in brewing, the heart of the brewer shines through.

In fact, this concept of fusion between the material and the master is not exclusive to Eastern art and philosophy. One of the most beautiful souls to walk this Earth, Helen Keller, once said, “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched—they must be felt with the heart.” Truly, this sentiment is cherished without geographical or cultural restrictions; it is universal, and precious to us all. As long as you are willing to still your mind, you also will enjoy the *Qin* or a fine tea as much as any Chinese scholar or emperor. Tea binds us all, and I imagine that Emperor Huizong’s spirit is thrilled to be a member of this Global Tea Hut!



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Gongfu Experiments

THE SOUND OF TEA

UNDERSTANDING MUSIC IN A CUP

🍵👤: Kent Steedman

Music has a tremendous effect on our experience of tea, but what about on the tea itself? Kent decided to put his sensitivity and his brilliant stereosystem to the test, changing music over the course of a single session. He invites us all to explore a subtler influence this month, beyond teaware or brewing method.





All things are frequency and vibration, and therefore sound. From its very beginning, Tea is sound: from the wind, rain and sun to the falling of the seed when it lands on the ground to the sound of the sprouts that make it penetrating up through soil to the dancing of the leaves that fall back to the ground once they have grown up. To infuse tea and take it into us also happens with sound: of water boiling and pouring, the sound of the coals or fire crackling or even electricity through a heater; and then into the steeping of the leaves, with the lid tinkling against the pot, the decanting of the liquor into cups; and let us not forget the slurping and sipping! Every bit of tea has sound, so it's obvious that within us tea also responds to sound and music. Sound is special; so is Tea. Tone is consciousness; so is Tea.

Try experimenting with music while sitting with Tea; notice how a deeper penetration can happen, thicker or clearer—it can all vanish anyway—it all works somehow. The style of music chosen can affect the tea ceremony, and can relax or stimulate, completely changing the overall experience of a tea session.

While contemplating this article, I experimented while drinking twelve rounds of gongfu tea, brewing oolong over ninety minutes or so with four types of music, conversation and silence. Each had an effect. I noticed how I felt and how Tea felt listening to classical ballet music, Swampy Tony Joe White, Oscar Peterson with Anita O'Day jazz and Arvo Pärt choral music. The mood was different for each, to be sure, but how the tea felt in my mind and body also changed. I felt the taste deepen with some tracks—the way the tea moved in my body. There was a depth to the thick energy with other kinds of music, and the awareness of my intellect shifted, too.

I confess I was listening to LPs through a tube amp, so the sound quality was high, but that's just like using nice kettles, teaware and water, as we are asked to experiment with in each issue of *Global Tea Hut*. We have been inspired to contemplate these changes, and through our growing gongfu, we learn to respect the tea and the session.

Traditionally, playing music during tea enhanced the experience for guests. The ancients used chants,

flute or the *Gugin*. I have also found that electric guitars, gongs and percussion work in a similar way with Tea, and help people slide into a meditative state.

Personally, I can also say that before playing a live show myself, I share tea with the members of the six-piece electric guitar orchestra with whom I play, and every one of them has commented on how the tea helps them enjoy playing that much more, not to mention putting them in a clear mindset. This stems from *phi* and *pi*, and the golden ratio of all Nature, in which Tea and us are one, so the equation, the notes and the sound frequency all align with the harmony within Nature, Tea and us. We return to that truth. Therefore, tea becomes and lends a hand in helping us relate back to what is balanced and harmonized in Nature, and in our hearts when our awareness is at its best. Tea creates the space for us to rest in the connection to Nature already in us. The sound of the source—be it the ocean, whalesong, wind, water or mountain forest. Our music of choice helps tea deliver a deeper experience. We travel further into the tea.

Experiments can be done with precise tonal and vibrational frequency sets aligned with specific timing to understand what this is and how it functions, but that is a deeper experiment for another time. We are simple tea lovers.

Experiment

For this month, let's all experiment with sound and gongfu tea. Let's try drinking a familiar tea—one that we know by name, and already have a lasting friendship with. Maybe you can make a playlist, or switch LPs, as I have. Choose some music with very different frequencies and let the tracks change

over the course of a single session. You may even want to take notes. Jot down the differences in the tea, and in your own experience as the music shifts. If you have chosen very different music, you should also notice a drastic shift in the quality of the tea, and of your experience of it. Does Tea listen to the music, too? Can you feel that? And if so, how does She feel about each track?

If you conduct this experiment with friends, you can then compare notes afterwards and see how they felt. You may find a surprising concordance in your experience of the tea session. It will be rewarding to have a conversation about how different kinds of music impacted your experience. You may also want to

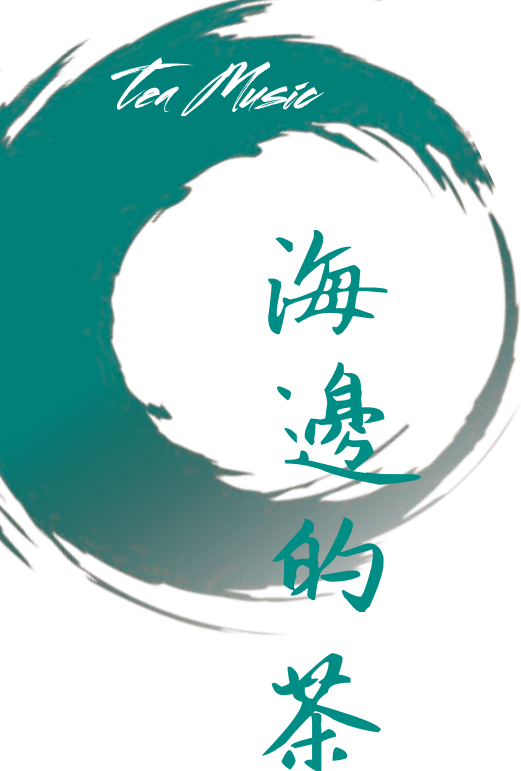
try a steeping in silence just to see how that differs as well. As usual, try using a tea you and your guests are familiar with, so you will notice changes more easily. If you do not have someone with whom you can do this experiment, you can always go online to our discussion board on the website and share your findings with the whole community. We would love to hear from you!



The results of such an experiment are all the more palpable if the music is played for you live. Joyce played for us as we did ours!







TEA BY THE SEA

A MEETING OF THREE SPECIES

茶人: Harold Linde

From the first time we shared tea with Harold at the Center until now, we've been exchanging tea music. One of our first conversations was about the melding of a great album with a session of fine tea. He has a great ear and a beautiful soul, which of course results in wonderful taste in music. This album he's produced is on a long list of rewarding work Harold has contributed to in order to better our planet. Tea is inspiring brothers and sisters to good works around the globe.

It was never my intention to make an album. I'm not a musician, nor have I ever worked in the music industry. I am an environmental activist and educator by profession, specializing in creating a variety of media to foster awe and wonder toward the natural world.

But then I spent a Christmas in Wisconsin, and this all changed. It was a cold night and I was sitting in the dark around a kitchen table with Jessica Gardiner, my soon-to-be fellow producer. Christmas music played in the background. I felt sad...

They were the same Christmas songs I'd been hearing for months—at every gas station, escalator, doctor's office, grocery store and public bathroom. I lamented how a holiday that had once been considered sacred had become so excessively commercial, with plastic Santa Claus as its emblem. Then, a curious question arose in my mind:

Would it be possible to create a new kind of sacred music for the winter holidays?

An image of whales appeared in my mind's eye. I began hearing their otherworldly intoning inside my head.

And then I realized how whale-song had not been appropriated by consumer culture. Also, through their impenetrable melodies, the whales conveyed a sense of awe and mystery that I found so lacking around the holidays. Thus the idea of *Pod Tune* was born: *an album of whales singing Christmas carols!*

After a year of extensive research and experimentation with digital music-finessing technologies, it became clear that whales would never be able to actually "sing" Christmas carols. Still, the idea of whales taking part in a new paradigm of uplifting, inspired music remained with me.

We forged on, exploring other possible music genres that might work. Eventually, ambient arose as the optimal choice. Ambient music so often contains otherworldly resonances. It also has a soundtrack quality—emotionally moving, yet

never demanding your full attention. Also, ambient music, by design, acts as an accompaniment to a larger unfolding narrative (in our case, our listeners' lives). Ambient music is even undergoing a kind of renaissance nowadays.

Most importantly, ambient music can facilitate sacred experiences (without reverting to such new-age-y themes as the soundtracks to *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Tree of Life*). Ambient's potential for deeply spiritual, media-based experiences seemed perfect for our project.

So we began researching and reaching out to the world's great ambient musicians. We asked them if they might be willing to compose an original track using whale vocalizations as voices and/or instruments. Nearly all responded positively. We were even lucky enough to enroll prominent musicians from both Taiwan and Mainland China to participate, which was nice as it brought another voice from the homeland of Tea to the project.

The album cover for the beautiful tea-inspired album, Pod Tune. Songs from Pod Tune are on the gift album included this month.



“Humans, humpback whales and, of course, Tea—all participating in one conversation. In doing so, our three species might have collectively created one of the world’s great ambient tea albums!”



Harold drinking tea at home, perhaps making the soul space for his next project. Above, Qing Yu, Harold and Rob share tea together on Qing's balcony, where so many of us once sat and drank bowl after bowl late into the evening. It's amazing that such beautiful projects are born in ordinary tea sessions like these, happening each and every day in this global tea community.

Next, we sought out the leading whale institutions and researchers across the globe. We asked for access to their catalog of recorded whalesong (during the process, we decided to donate all net proceeds to organizations helping whales and oceans). Once again, all agreed to help us.

Eventually, we created a crowdfunding campaign to provide enough funds to provide minimal stipends for the musicians and to pay for all production costs.

As the process unfolded, we noticed that our whale album—like whale migrations—had a pace all its own. Great patience was required, over three years' worth in the end. Two other producers joined us in the evolution: Rob Ganger (another Global Tea Hut member and tea lover) and later, Dr. Jenney Hall.

As the completed tracks started to trickle in and we began arranging them in order for the album, I noticed a peculiar feeling taking hold of me. I was being affected by a new, as-of-yet unnamed type of music—clearly related to ambient,

but a new sub-genre I had never heard of before.

It was during the making of *Pod Tune* that I was serendipitously introduced to living, wild, mystical tea ceremonies by Wu De, Qing Yu (Colin Hudon), Jared Krause and Tian Wu (Baelyn Elspeth). I even had the opportunity to visit the Center in Taiwan while the production of the whale album was unfolding. I attended workshops and retreats, accepted invitations to numerous tea sessions and began my own daily practice of tea. I eventually converted my studio apartment into a tea hut!

And, as I played the whale/human music album during my own tea sessions, it occurred to me that the experience was in fact about *three* species coming together to create something wondrous:

*Homo sapiens Megaptera novaeangliae
and Camellia sinensis*

Humans, humpback whales and Tea—all participating in one conversation. In doing so, our three spe-

cies might have collectively created one of the world's great "Ambient Tea" albums!

Pod Tune represents a highly collaborative process, involving fourteen musical acts from nine different countries, four dedicated producers (Harold Linde, Jessica Gardiner, Rob Ganger, and Jenney Hall), top whale research scientists and institutions from all corners of the Earth (including Ocean Alliance, David Rothenberg, Kent Noonan, Macaulay Library, Paul Knapp, and The Whalesong Project), humpback whales recorded in a variety of oceans and a multitude of support from crowdfunding supporters and the Global Tea Hut community—and especially our friend, the living, wild Tea intelligence Herself!





Many artists around the globe participated in making this album, but none as important as the whales themselves.

Pod Tune is also a great tea album. We've listened to it several times at the Center, over some very nice tea. It seems to resonate with sheng and shou puerh both.

Visit www.podtune.com to learn more. Net proceeds go to whale and ocean organizations around the world!



TEA MUSIC PART II

茶人: Mike Baas

More than a year ago, before many of you were here in this Hut, Mike wrote an article about tea and music, including some suggestions for albums that go well with tea. Mike is also a songwriter, though, who makes electronic music. Here, he writes of his recent efforts to make an album, and how tea helped in the process, ending with some more great suggestions for albums we should all check out.

Last year, a friend of mine completed his first ten-day Vipassana meditation course in the California desert. I drove out there to visit him on the day his silence was broken. He was wildly changed! For hours, he digested his course aloud to me: the madness, confusion, anger, ecstasy, boredom, doubt, reconciliation, pain and insight of it all. It was great to see my good, long-struggling friend so changed. At the end of his exhilarating rant, he grabbed me by the shirt collar and exhorted: "You must read Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* as soon as you can!" Knowing my bias against reading works of fiction in lieu of spiritual material, I watched my impulse to say "no" arise. The impulse was soon replaced by a glowing feeling of "yes." This was my own insight arising out of my friend's meditative hard work—a gift. I found myself buying a mass-market paperback copy that evening.

As I have given up the practice of reading without tea, I began my journey into *The Dispossessed* amongst my old friends "Ket-

tle" and "Pot," well-steeped in my favorite shou puerh (disregarding the summer heat altogether). The book begins with the protagonist undergoing a meditation experience of sorts, of the futuristic sci-fi kind. He spends the rest of the book chasing resolution to something he glimpses inside of himself. His quest takes place between two opposing worlds/societies: the first a nearly barren moon fostering a single clan founded on anarchist principles is free from the madness of markets, simplified down to bare essentials only. A Chajin would feel at home there, so long as the craggy, dusty soil stayed capable of sustaining tea bushes, which wasn't always the case. The other dwells on a planet first introduced as a place of opulent luxury is later found to be hypocritically hiding inequalities in underground off-limits zones. It was a proxy planet for our First World Earth. I imagined the new moon society operating as Light Meets Life will someday, sprung from the kind donations of those successfully

navigating our current societal structure, some of whom might suspect there's another way of doing things free from buying and selling. Fantasizing and reflecting upon these new human possibilities throughout, with Le Guin's insightful words and Tea's insightful energy, I finally reached the end of the book where the protagonist reconciles in Zen fashion the paradoxical wall set up between the two societies with their respective realities. As I closed the book, a thought like lighting arose: "You should create the soundtrack to this book!"

The thought had all the accompanying characteristics of yet another Tea dictate: a flush of uplifting sensation from my heart through the top of my head, a Cheshire-cat grin smeared across my face, and a very noticeable background of fear, the kind that only arises when you know you absolutely have to do something that you do not yet know how to do. The prospect was thrilling. I knew right away how it would start.



*Watch a video on
music and Tea now!*



www.globalteahut.org/videos

靈感 創造力

I would take the desert landscape of my friend silhouetted against the meditation center, couple it with the dusty and dry purity of the burgeoning moon community, and then fuse both of those to a futuristic Tea vibration. I did not yet have a sound palette from which to work, but Tea had already set in motion the fine-tuning process of my music workspace. I had all the ergonomics and machines I would need in perfect working order, leaving little to no room for excuses why I couldn't create at any given hour. "Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning" had served me well!

The process of creating the soundtrack had three meaningful stages. The first stage was a flood of sound design, getting to know the personalities of all the different electronic synthesizers I had stacked

around me, all the while watching out for Tea's signal that I had found something worth bookmarking and adding to the palette. Tea communicated to me by way of bodily sensations and insightful thoughts, but sometimes just as an "ah-ha!" Once I had racked up a number of those, I started painting my landscapes, seeing if I had built up enough of an aesthetic to make songs that would cohere. It didn't take long to see that I had, which was very exciting. In short order, I had six complete songs and a number of sketches that had promise. This point in the process was some of the most rewarding creativity I had ever participated in, all thanks to Tea and the compassion of my friend who took the time to water the seeds of music I had within. Of course, as with anything utterly worthwhile in life, I would

soon run straight into the Great Wall of Difficulty. I, like the main character in the book, had some serious internal reconciliation yet to accomplish.

I took the six songs out to the car—the same car that had stopped countless endeavors of musical progress dead in their tracks before. This time, despite my positivity, the car stereo test would turn out no differently than in times past. Out of the pristine environment of the studio, the music in the car was destructively bass-heavy and seemingly devoid of the inspiration I had put into it. I watched the old patterns of despair arise in my mind. But unlike all the previous times in my life when this had derailed me, I sat still as the witness to these negative thoughts, remaining naturally unattached to them and the dark and



heavy depressed feelings that arose in my body. With Tea in my system, I was unflinchingly facing my own mind at full volume. It didn't take more than five minutes of analysis until I knew what I had to do: get a subwoofer in the studio and properly manage those frequencies! It was so rational, so scientific, and virtually unemotional, save the wave of hope that this time I would calmly solve the problem instead of throwing my music onto the rock pile of sonic defeat. After a couple weeks of waiting for deliveries and equipment modifications (all the while keeping my meditation and tea lifestyle at its maximum pitch) everything I needed for the music operation was hooked up.

Here began stage two, the overcoming-my-lack-of-engineering-confidence phase. I now had

on my engineer's hat and began tweaking my sounds to be comparable in both the studio and the car. I worked back and forth between the two late into many nights, taking mental notes of patterns and applying my findings across all my songs. I confidently trained my ears, trusting that Tea was unlocking my innate ability from within. Soon signals of satisfaction arose from the hard work: things were sounding great for once!

Stage three brought me into territory I had never been before. All of the parameters necessary for great music had finally arrived: an inspiring musical palette of sound, technology working for my benefit, engineering obstacles now manageable, and an insatiable desire to create welling up spontaneously from within. I continued to flesh

out the six songs and lean into my previous sketches, asking them all what they wanted to be complete. Here I made my first foray into Zen music territory with Tea as my general. There was one song in particular that I knew needed something extraordinarily rad done to it in its sixteen-bar solo section. I put the sequencer into loop mode and started developing idea upon idea, take upon take. James Brown was known to have said, "The first take is God, the second take is man," and I was venturing further and further into the territory of man, no Zen in sight. No matter how skilled and inspired my performances were, General Tea would not plant the flag of victory. As I deeply concentrated on developing the part, trying hard to hit the mark, I transitioned from musician to meditator,

observing myself at work. I quickly noticed that I was relying on old patterns of playing I had developed throughout my life, well-honed and cataloged within my two hands, and Tea was basically rejecting them all. The final requirement of this song was not to be accomplished by playing something with technical skill, but by unlocking something inside myself beyond what I knew I was capable of accomplishing. I needed to leave my ego behind to pass through the “Gateless Gate.” How I ended up doing this is still something I marvel at, and the solo I left behind in the recording for me is proof of having done it. I know that as I was getting closer to “done,” I felt a tremendous amount of resistance inside my physical body.

“*The process of making this album was some of the most rewarding creativity I had ever participated in, all thanks to Tea and the compassion of my friend who took the time to water the seeds of music I had within.*”

My desire to stop playing increased to a nearly irrational point. I completely lost track of how much time had passed since I started working on the solo. I continued leaning into all the thoughts and feelings now arising within telling me that I should just give up. I noticed physical pain in my legs building from sitting so long. Using my Vipassana training, I did not flinch from this but used it to concentrate my mind on the present moment even more fully. Working in this way, finally an instant came where, nearly breaking into a sweat, I played a series of notes that came from a place I clearly recognized as “not mine.” It had flowed through me from beyond. Astonished at the accomplishment, I lay down on the floor, grabbed my headphones and replayed it for myself again and again, reveling along with Tea that victory in this battle was ours!

There is a popular notion about Zen in Western culture supposing that Zen can be applied to just about any art, that the *Samadhi* of Zen meditation is the same as the no-mind of expert skill. The difference between the two is that Zen leads to a fundamental realization that changes one’s whole personality. I cannot claim that through this one musical experience my entire personality was radically altered. However, after having created art in this fully committed way just once, I was able to apply the same “entire self effort” to the rest of album with great results that dramatically affected my sense of self (or is it not-self?). Accomplishing this throughout thirteen tracks, overcoming almost always the same high level of

difficulty with each song in its own unique way, was very humbling. The additive effect of working through so much artistic stagnation while tarrying with this set of music, in a way that somehow helped make sense of my entire life as a musician, certainly changed my personality for the better. It gave me a kind of self-confidence whereby I found enough peace to declare, “I now have what it takes to be a good musician,” no question. In the end, after having passed through all the stages, I have a work that is proof of the greatness of Zen and Tea, at least as I experienced them. I created something and now I can let go.

As Ursula Le Guin says herself in her translation of the *Dao De Ching*:

To bear and not to own; to act and not lay claim; to do the work and let it go: for just letting it go is what makes it stay.

Although my album was inspired by tea, I would not exactly call it music for tea. That music will hopefully take shape at a later date! In the meantime, here are some selections of music I have recently grown to love. I regularly play these during tea ceremonies.

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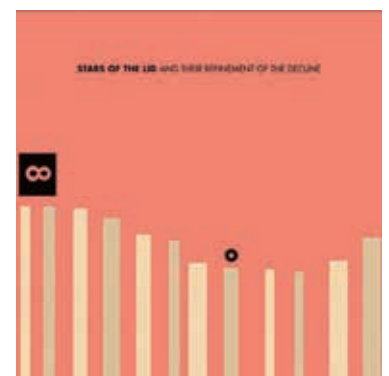


Steve Roach, *Structures From Silence*

As an artist quoted as saying, “Develop an empathy for the present moment and express this, and remember to breathe through it all,” Steve Roach’s ambient masterpieces are perfect for creating an introspective tea space. Within Roach’s prolific catalog, “Structures From Silence” is widely considered one of his best works. Although made with synthesizers, the album has a very organic quality, and is filled with long, evolving chords that naturally breathe in and out. Roach states that during the making of the title track he consciously “played with breath, the place in between the breath, the sigh.” It could be said that this is exactly what we are doing when we are deeply communing with Tea in the tea space. I find this album works best in evening tea sessions.

Adam Wiltzie, *A Winged Victory for the Sullen* *Stars of the Lid, Stars of the Lid &* *Their Refinement of the Decline*

Call it ambient, call it post-classical, call it what you will: these albums are sure to put your guests in the mood for some serious tea. This is music that is simultaneously easy and challenging, sorrowful and optimistic. If you are having trouble getting your tea guests to embrace staying silent, you need only put either of these on rotation. I tend to save these albums for sessions where I’ll be serving my best teas. They contain emotions similar to a Rothko painting: you keep listening and looking and they keep changing and giving. Isn’t that what Tea does as well? A perfect complement to aged puerh.



Eleven Centuries Of Traditional Chinese Music



When it comes to selecting music for tea, my first thought almost always turns to traditional Asian music. My trifecta is ancient melodies (the older, the better), solo ethnic instrumentation and a grainy recording that transports the listener to another time altogether. The compilation “Eleven Centuries Of Traditional Chinese Music” has all three! Sadly, my copy doesn’t credit any of the musicians or note the time and place of each recording. Admittedly, there are better recordings of traditional Asian music out there, but most are dedicated to a specific instrument: the zither, lute (pipa/biwa) or flute (and this just scratches the surface!). Having a selection of recordings featuring traditional instruments is a great thing for a Chajin to have in his or her chaxi toolkit. When played for a Western audience, their foreignness heightens the feeling of “one chance, one encounter” in the room. Take heed, though: some might find this kind of music irritating!

茶會音樂

MUSIC FOR TEA

茶人: Hanno Padar & Herkko Labi

We asked the global community to contribute some of their music and tea advice, and Herkko and Hanno submitted some wisdom. Having been turned on to so many amazing albums from Herkko's suggestions and then having listened to Hanno play guitar during a tea session has lent credence to what they have to say on the matter. They both provide some great ideas for tuning your session to a higher level via music.

Celebrating the Connection in B Major

Music has been in my life since early childhood thanks to my mother, who is a folklorist. She took me everywhere with her: traditional song and dance classes, the radio station while she made a broadcast, choir practices, and elsewhere. Tea came consciously into my life much later, but quite soon I realized that they speak a similar language. Combining these two beautiful medicines, I have become lighter and more peaceful.

At the beginning of every tea ceremony, I need to tune the mind. This is not the simplest task, especially when I first started my practice. However, well-chosen music (sometimes that means spontaneously-chosen music) can help one to center and to let go of everyday thoughts and roles, which are often assimilated without reason. And

probably most importantly it helps to still the mind, which relaxes into the delicate flow of the music, and often becomes more receptive to Tea and Her teachings. When music is played or sung live, its effect is always the most immediate, but that luxury doesn't happen very often.

I usually like to listen to simple acoustic improvisational music as well as religious music (Gregorian chants, Hindu or Buddhist mantras or traditional prayers from different parts of world) over tea. Acoustic music is often liberating and has a light flow. If it's more improvisational and doesn't really repeat itself in exactly the same way, it helps me notice new nuances each time, like I do in each steeping of a tea. Religious music creates sensitive sacredness and a sense of accuracy. For me, it resonates the most with gongfu

brewing. In addition to these, I have found a cosmic ambient music style, which changes the space into something otherworldly, this is often best when it comes to letting go of everyday concerns.

If one has a chance to serve tea outdoors in the open air, then Nature Herself takes care of the soundtrack. It might be a bit harder to focus the mind, but if it happens, the experience can be bliss beyond words. While indoors, music is also not always necessary. In silence, all those sounds that went unnoticed before will start to reveal themselves: Nature sounds or street noises, the murmur of the kettle, other sounds in the house, neighbors, breathing, and so on. Sometimes nothing more is needed to keep the mind silent and present. The natural sounds lead us inwards.

We had a lovely Guqin tea session in Kunming this year at the end of our annual trip. The music was sublime.



This relationship between music and Tea is not one-sided—Tea can also help to create music. The more time goes by, the more I find that tea helps the mind to be empty, without obstacles. It allows me to let go of thoughts and feelings which in ordinary situations might get stuck. This makes space for a huge potential for different kinds of creative activity, whether it be music, poetry, visual art, life situations, some form of relationship or anything else.

Like most situations in everyday life, creating music works better when one approaches it as a beginner. Music that emerges this way is purer, simpler and clearer, though it may be very complex in harmony or in its overall structure.

Composer and discoverer of Tinnabuli style Arvo Pärt is an Estonian national treasure. He's also a

gift to world culture, often considered the greatest living composer. In 2013, I attended a series of lectures about his music coordinated by professor Toomas Siitan at the University of Tartu, with Pärt in attendance. One of the biggest lessons, which surfaced repeatedly throughout the series, was that one needs to be empty in order to channel musical creativity. It means that a majority of the time during the creative process is spent in preparation and in maintaining a certain state of mind—a ready mind. He has even said, "Silence is the pause in me when I am near to God."

Arvo Pärt often finds his way to our sweet *Chado* teashop. His apartment is actually a small way down the same street. He gently removes his coat, and stays a while. He, too, is a conscious, present tea

drinker, and so we have a feeling that the Leaf is present in his creations as well. The specific manner in which this happens will hopefully become apparent in the future. And if not, we will also be happy to let it remain steeped in mystery.

-Hanno

True lovers: Music & Tea

What better music for a practitioner of the Way than *silence*. And with that, I could just finish writing and sit down for a nice cup of tea. What else is there to say? Even before turning on the heat under my kettle, I go to my stereo and put on my favorite tea drinking song at the moment: *Vostok* by Craig Padilla. Silence, yes! But tea with some harmonizing music—also a big YES! Can they work together? A bit of music and some grounding silence?

Vostok starts with cosmic synths, which slowly build up the central melody of this fifty-one-minute-long tribute to deep, comforting sound. I've noticed that when you first sit behind the pot and listen to the first few minutes of the music, you can instantly understand if a tea likes or dislikes the chosen track. It is strange that songs otherwise so relaxing and peaceful can have contrary effects on tea drinking. Why this is interests me very much. Why is *Vostok* good tea music while that of my favorite artist, Loscil, which is also really relaxing and deep, is not nice for tea?

Music in general is a play of frequencies that our mind can pick up and interpret accordingly. If you have drunk tea for some time now, you surely have noticed how your mind and your surrounding environment act together. When your mind calms and grounds, your surroundings also seem light, relaxed and at ease. This does not mean that you have some magical powers. It is just you tuning in to a state of being that reflects the world around you accordingly. Now, if you bring into this state of mind some music, it quickly starts to resonate (or not). I think this is why Tea is so sensitive to music—in opening up our senses and widening the specter of our minds, it also transforms our ability to listen. It is then more a feeling of

music tuning into the state of being than a personal concept or choice of listening to a particular song. And if this feeling is in discordance, you instantly react and often change the music.

Being so sensitive to music, Tea is of course wisest when enjoyed in silence. How else would the ancient hermits have drunk their cups, if not to the sounds of birds, rain and the proverbial wind sighing the pines? Of course, traditional Chinese music has always been a counterpart to tea drinking. And if you listen to some of it while drinking tea, you quickly also understand why—it was often specially made for social occasions wherein tea played a central role. There was not such a wide distance between music and Tea. But most of our contemporary music is not created for Tea. This is why the tuning between them has to be taken with caution and requires a lot of experimenting before sharing the music with guests.

I like to compare choosing music for a tea session with storing tea in a jar or a room. If a jar has some strange smell, the tea stored in it will easily take this smell and you will never get rid of it. Wu De often teaches that if one puts a rose in the middle of a room filled with puerh, after some time the tea would all smell like roses. I see a similar delicate relationship between Tea and music. If you play the wrong songs in the middle of your tea session, the whole evening can be ruined. Okay, “ruined” may sound strong, but we must act wisely and experiment a lot before hosting a formal session, so the chosen music can give your evening that extra blessing it needs. But how to pick good tea music?

First of all, there is the question of personal taste. You can't choose a song that you really dislike. That's

easy. You can try playing a song you don't really like, but think will go well with a tea, but your mind will give you a hard time for it. Second of all, you should sit quietly with the music and drink some tea at the same time. I've found that if at some point I forget the music is even playing and start focusing more on the tea, then the music is working with this tea. And if the music keeps coming back to my attention, something is not right. Maybe it's a synth that has been played too hard or a melody that is agitating me. Whatever the case, I'll know that this music is not suitable for this tea.

The music has to work every time you drink tea with it. Not just “this one time when everything was perfect.” This is a rule. It may sound strange, as we all have our personal favorites and what we like, another may dislike. But with Tea, it seems a bit different: most music does not work with Tea. Most of your favorite artists won't suit Tea well. Try, and you'll find it to be true. But when a musical piece does flow into the tea and start to harmonize with *its* flow, such concert will recur every time you try again. Certain music resonates with certain teas, in other words. That insight is actually life-changing, and can begin a new era of exploration and experimentation.

From a more practical point of view, I recommend keeping the volume rather low; making a playlist and having a couple of back-up songs in case of some emergency; letting the kettle boil in silence and only starting the music after the first bowl or even later; being extra careful with music that has vocals, as lyrics easily distract the mind; and, finally, as always in this tradition: *experiment a lot!*

-Herkko

Some recommendations for contemporary tea drinking albums:

Vostok by Craig Padilla (this is a bit too electronic for most, but still give it a try).

LUX by Brian Eno (one of my all-time favorite tea albums).

Shallow by Porya Hatami (this has to be played at low volume, otherwise it's too intense).

Still by M. Ostermeier (as the name says, this is music for being still).

Sleep by Max Richter (suitable also for an eight-hour tea session).

Perhaps by Harold Budd (a good example of disappearing sound).

The wonderful and beautiful Triin serving tea while Hanno plays guitar and Herkko watches the babies.



Teawayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and Tea are becoming as the Tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce Brandon Boyd.

I've spent most of my life juggling my relationship with technology; both wary of it and grateful for it, a bit like a coin toss whereby I, the user, can decide more often than not on which side I'd like the shiny alloy to land. Do I take the antibiotic for this cough, or should I ride this one out and power up on vitamin C and rest? Should I turn on the air conditioning today or maybe open the doors and let the outside in? Shall I check my phone to see what has appeared in the past twenty minutes or maybe read that book? This last decision is perhaps one of the more perilous ones that we are faced with of late.

I am at the ripe age of 40; young enough to have processing space for tech developments whereby I can embrace new, shiny modes of transport, but old enough to recall a time when there was space to be bored. I feel almost blessed in a way to have lived half of my life unplugged and half (so far) with three prongs into the grid.

Tea came into my life at an amazingly opportune moment, as I am sure it did for most of you. Like a gentle gust of serendipity, its simple yet sturdy song crept into my world right at a time when I had begun taking meditation more seriously. I had made the decision to do so because I was starting to get the sense that certain elements of my inner experience were beginning to (or perhaps I was just noticing them) fragment. My attentions seemed to be starting to structure themselves a little too much like the way the Internet was structured. Like a web, but not the kind we imagine right away, backlit in morning sun with supple drops of dew glistening on the silk. No, my attentions were more akin to the web you find behind the garage or under the house; erratic and formless, leaving one wondering if they'd even want to encounter who or what designed it.

Tea took its time to really penetrate my daily routine. I would banter with it and enjoyed our talks and our silences, but I was slow to dive deeper. I felt like the extended family around me had that covered. The vast and swift enthusiasm for this new friend almost brought an inner contrarian out in me. Like the band all your friends raved about that you rolled your eyes at until the moment you got them to yourself on a long drive and finally "got it," Tea eventually sang to me in a way that I desperately needed. And after years of enjoying the ritual, the fine craftsmanship, the history, the stories, the conversations, the silence, and yes, the divine flavors, I have come to realize this morning that Tea has almost proved itself a psychic avatar of sorts, arriving precisely at the moment when it was needed most.

Once Tea had Her soft claws in me, I began noticing how my other friend, the Internet, kept tugging my attentions away from hot water and leaves. My desire to check my



phone became a little like a phantom menace of sorts. And I started to feel the way that friends who were trying to quit smoking had described their attempts to me. I was tethered, in a sense, and the cord was widening, stronger with each tug. So, here was something quietly and successfully drawing neural maps alongside something that was gracefully and slowly making maps of its own. One leading me into presence and mindfulness, one fragmenting my attentions and making it harder and harder to remain present. But what does a lad do when the problem also offers so much hope of connectivity? Practice, young Jedi. Practice. Music is born of silence in my experience, which has a pang of irony, as it requires so much noise to arrive at an end result with song craft. All that being said, I have had some of my proudest moments as a songwriter in the presence of Tea and Silence.

I don't want this piece to be seen as a diatribe against technology. I am fascinated by technology and I believe in it. But something being mindful on occasion has taught me is that there is never *just* a good idea. There are always unintended consequences. The acknowledgment of both sides of the coin before tossing it, while it's spinning in the air and in the moment before you read the outcome, is both wise and necessary. Imagine all that we've learned from this millennia-old ritual of leaves and water, silence and presence, and I challenge you to not agree with me, Tea Geeks, that Tea is the perfect medicine for the age of the Internet.

Inside the Hut

Because of the large number of tea sessions happening around the world, we are going to post about them on our website from now on and use this section to discuss news happening around the world. If you have any news, like a wedding, birth or tea happening, let us know and we'll write about it here. Also, our new website coming in the next few months will connect you to tea sessions around the world in a much better way than this page ever could!



The 2016 Light Meets Life Fundraiser is now in full swing, with more and more cakes showing up all the time. We have two amazing old-growth sheng teas this year, a Five Element shou, an amazing Dian Hong from Big Snow Mt. and another surprise as well!



We have a new page for Wu De's teaching events around the world. Many of you are always asking for updates, so we thought it was about time to share them: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wude teachings>.



We have started broadcasting live videos at the beginning of every month on our Facebook page. This is a great way to connect with us, learn together and ask any and all questions. Check it out!



The 2016 Photo Contest has officially begun! It will be going until August 5th, with only one entry per person this year. Runners-up will get free months of Global Tea Hut for friends and winners will get cakes, a Petr Novak side-handle teapot & Wu De's artwork!



We are giving away two cakes of Ambrosia each month until the end of the year. All you have to do to be eligible is take a picture of yourself serving Global Tea Hut tea and post it on Instagram with the hashtag #servingglobalteahut. We have already given the first few away! Don't miss the chance!



Wu De will be facilitating a six-day retreat in the Spanish Pyrenees. It will be a Zen & Tea One Flavor retreat focusing on the connection between meditation and tea. Participants will gather fresh spring water, meditate a few hours a day, learn chanting and have tea as well as Zen discourses throughout. It will be a rare chance to deepen your practice and learn tea at the same time. And, if that wasn't enough, it is being held at a gorgeous venue in the mountains of rural Spain. This event will run from October 8th to 14th. If you are interested in attending, please check out the website: www.casacuadrau.org.

Wu De will also be traveling in Germany and the Czech Republic after the retreat, sharing tea and teaching Cha Dao.

Center News



Before you visit, check out the Center's website (www.teasagehut.org) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. We've had a big increase in our number of guests lately, so if possible, please contact us well in advance to arrange a visit.



We are looking for help with farming, photography, video and web design. If any of you have experience in these things and are interested in staying at the Center to learn Cha Dao, with free room and board, contact us!



We have started gathering money towards offering one annual scholarship to fly someone to the Center each year. Once we have enough, we will let the community nominate candidates. Let us know if you want to contribute to help make this happen!



We have started a daily inspirational video series, where we will share small clips of joy in the life of the Tea Sage Hut!

August Affirmation

I love and accept myself.

Do I judge myself? Before I can start participating in the world in a compassionate way, I must first learn to love myself, accepting all my character defects as the first step in overcoming them.



www.globalteahut.org

The best Tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.

GLOBAL TEA HUT

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