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Naamyam Songs of Love and Longing (訴衷情:杜煥馨師地水南音精選), ***Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure 1***. 2007. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Yu Siu-wah. Hong Kong: Bailey Record Co. and the Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-07001. Booklet (24 pp.) with colour photographs, lyrics, and liner notes by Yu Siu-wah, Bell Yung, and Erica Lee in Chinese. CD, 2 discs (CD 1, 4 tracks, 69:33; CD 2, 6 tracks, 63:39).

Blind Dou Wun Remembers His Past: 50 Years of Singing Naamyam in Hong Kong (飄泊香江五十年地水南音: 全本《失明人杜煥憶往》), ***Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure 2***. 2008. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Yu Siu-wah. Hong Kong: Bailey Record Co. and the Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-08001. Booklet (85 pp.) with single-colour graphics, lyrics, and liner notes by Yu Siu-wah, Bell Yung, and Sonia Ng in Chinese. CD, 6 discs (CD 1, 62:08; CD 2, 53:42; CD 3, 61:24; CD 4, 57:01; CD 5, 58:06; CD 6, 66:01).

Rare Recordings of Melodies from a Bygone Age (絕世遺音: 板眼, 龍舟, 粵謳), ***Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure 3***. 2011. Performed by Dou Wun and Lee Ngan-giu. Produced by Yu Siu-wah. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-11001. Booklet (27 pp.) with colour photographs and lyrics, and liner notes by Yu Siu-wah, Bell Yung, and Sonia Ng in Chinese. CD, 1 disc (53:47).

Jade Palm—Leaf Fan (《玉葵寶扇》之〈大鬧梅知府〉、〈碧蓉探監〉: 馨師杜煥演唱龍舟版本), ***Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure 4***. 2012. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Bell Yung and Yu Siu-wah. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-12001. Booklet (20 pp.) with lyrics and liner notes by Bell Yung and Sonia Ng in Chinese. CD, 1 disc (59:14).

The Blind Musician Dou Wun Offers Auspicious Songs for Festive Occasions (八仙賀壽: 警師杜煥賀喜慶), *Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure* 5. 2013. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Bell Yung and Lee Tong Soon. Booklet (24 pp.) with illustration by Leumas To and liner notes by Bell Yung and Sonia Ng in Chinese. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-13001. CD, 1 disc (59:13).

The Birth of Guanyin, Goddess of Mercy (觀音出世), *Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure* 6. 2015. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Bell Yung and Lee Tong Soon. Booklet (38 pp.) with colour photographs and liner notes by Bell Yung and Sonia Ng in Chinese. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-15001. CD, 3 discs (CD 1, 57:54; CD 2, 56:12; CD 3, 52:17).

Excerpts from Literary Masterpieces (名著摘錦: 警師杜煥首本南音), *Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure* 7. 2016. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Bell Yung and Lee Tong Soon. Booklet (39 pp.) with colour photographs, lyrics, and liner notes by Bell Yung and Sonia Ng in Chinese. Hong Kong: The Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CMA-16001. CD, 2 discs (CD 1, 81:51; CD2, 68:32).

Revenge in Guang Chang Long: Deishui Naamyam Sung by Blind Master Dou Wun (大鬧廣昌隆), *Hong Kong's Cultural Treasure* 8. 2019. Performed by Dou Wun. Produced by Bell Yung and Frederick Lau. Booklet (21 pp.) with lyrics and liner notes by Sonia Ng and Bell Yung in Chinese. Hong Kong: The Center for Chinese Music Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CCMS-19001. CD, 2 discs (CD 1, 77:40; CD 2, 57:36).

These eight sets of audio recordings, contained on eighteen compact discs, were released over a period of twelve years from 2007 to 2019. Altogether they brought us back to the mid-1970s in Hong Kong, where the visiting ethnomusicologist Bell Yung recorded more than forty hours of Cantonese ballads, the vast majority of which were sung (and self-accompanied) by Dou Wun (1910–1979), a visually impaired musician who excelled in the art of Cantonese narrating singing. Dou Wun hailed from the tradition of itinerant oral poet-singers of Hong Kong (and other Cantonese-speaking towns of the Pearl River Delta), where brothels, opium dens, and teahouses had been major venues for the flourishing of these storytelling songs during the interwar period. At the time when these recordings were made, the popularity of Cantonese narrative songs had already subsided, and Dou Wun had been retired from active, routine performance, only singing occasionally at the Goethe Institute and university campuses for a primarily non-local, academic audience. To conceive of what Dou Wun's music might have sounded like a few decades

earlier and in its original context, Yung arranged to have him sing for a live audience of teahouse patrons at the antiquated Fu Loong Teahouse (now demolished), in Sheung Wan, northwest Hong Kong island, over a three-month period in the spring of 1975, for a reconstructive recording project.

Cantonese sung oral poetry invites comparison with other lyrical storytelling arts found across Asia, such as Taiwan's *liam kua* narrative songs, Hmong *kwv txhiaj* song poetry, as well as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other bardic epic singings found across nomadic Central Asia. The vast majority of Dou Wun's recorded songs belong to the Cantonese genre *naam yam* (lit., "southern sound"; *pinyin*: *nanyin*—not to be confused with the Hokkien art song tradition of Taiwan and southeastern Fujian). Its artistry hinges on the solo vocalist's talent in the improvisatory reciting of epic tales, some of which are very long and with complex storylines, taking days, sometimes weeks, to perform. The libretto—some passed down from decades or centuries ago; others almost completely improvised—is masterfully woven into a musico-poetic structure of rhymed quatrains, each of which comprises two pairs of seven-syllable lines. Dou Wun's singing was versatile and multifaceted; in one scene he vividly depicted a fierce fight using a guttural, martial voice, in another he mourned the misfortune of a deceased courtesan with a heart-wrenching elegy. Instrumentation is often flexible and unassuming. In most *naam yam* songs heard in the collection, Dou Wun accompanied himself on the bridged zither *zang* (*zheng*) with his right hand, while outlining the rhythm with a pair of wooden clappers with the other. Instruments used in other *naam yam* performances and recordings include also the coconut-shell fiddle *je wu* (*yehu*) or the *ceon wu* (*qinhu*), the plucked lute *ceon kam* (*qinqin*), as well as the vertical bamboo flute *siu* (*xiao*)—an intimate, supple heterophony that is uniquely Cantonese.

Dou Wun's *naam yam* songs cover a wide range of subjects. A good number of the best-known classics in his repertoire—such as "*Haak Tou Cau Han*" ("Wayfarer's Autumn Lament"; Set 1), "*Naam Diu Yi*" ("A Man Burning the Joss Paper"; Set 1), and "*Daai Naau Gwong Coeng Lung*" ("Revenge in Guang Chang Long"; Set 8)—sing about the aching love stories of courtesans and their clients. Others are stories and legends commonly found in Chinese and other East Asian oral and literary genres, such as "*Seoi Wu Zyun*" ("Water Margin"; Set 7), "*Baa Wong Bit Gei*" ("Farewell My Concubine"; Set 1), and "*Hung Lau Mung*" ("Dream of the Red Chamber"; Set 7). A major part of Dou Wun's repertoire deals with sacred subjects, and were performed at ritual occasions. Set 6 offers a glimpse into one of the classics "*Gun Jam Ceot Sai*" ("The Birth of Bodhisattva"), a tale about the incarcerations of Hong Kong's most popular deity. Dou Wun remembered that he had often been invited to sing the entire set—which would take seven days, three hours in each—at ritual celebrations on Bodhisattva's birthday. Set 5 also includes two *naam yam* songs that summon the spirits of the Taoist gods *Baat Sin* (the eight immortals) and *Tin Gun* (the heaven official) to bestow blessings on his patrons.

Dou Wun's brilliance as an improviser is most aptly showcased in *Blind Dou Wun Remembers His Past*, the second set in the series, for which he performed a twelve-episode autobiographical ballad (totalling six hours). Here he recounts his impoverished

childhood and early musical apprenticeship in Canton (Guangzhou); memories of singing at brothels and opium dens in Hong Kong during the 1920s and 1930s; his own opium addiction, marriage, and the tragic death of his wife and all their four children; Hong Kong's suffering under Japanese occupation; as well as the post-war decline of the art of *naam yam*. At times poignant, at times raunchy, his singing reveals human fragility and resilience in the face of life's brutality.

Not all songs in the series are *naam yam*. Trained as an itinerant minstrel, Dou Wun also professed in the singing of *lung zau* (lit., "dragon boat"), a vernacular street singing genre that features speech-like, inflected poetic text sung in largely flexible rhythm/metre. In a typical *lung zau* performance, the solo vocalist accompanied himself on a portable pair of percussion—a small gong and a small drum, and no melodic instrument—as he wandered from door to door singing auspicious tunes and prayers for their patrons on specific occasions. This type of *lung zau* songs are brief and upbeat, such as "*Sum Soeng Si Sing Lung Zau*" ("All Wishes Come True"; Set 5). Meanwhile, the core repertoire of *lung zau* songs are much more extensive, constituting a Cantonese literary genre called *muk jyu syu* (lit., "wood fish book") as they were published and widely circulated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among these, Dou Wun sang two episodes from the well-known epic "*Juk Kwai Bou Sin*" ("Jade Palm—Leaf Fan"; Set 4) and an excerpt of a Mou Cong story, titled "*Zai Ling*" ("Worship"; Set 3).

A special note should be made on two outlying genres of the collection. Dou Wun kept a very small oeuvre of lowly, vulgar songs called *baan ngaan* (lit., "beats"), which, with their pornographic lyrics, catered primarily to brothel visitors and courtesans. One of these, included in Set 3, is "*Loeng Lou Kai Aai Gaau*" (Paramours' squabble), in which Dou Wun played multiple characters in a brothel story. Another *baan ngaan* song Yung recorded (but not released in the series) is the highly explicit "*Can Yi Suk*" ("Uncle Chan"), which, according to Dou Wun, would bring great misfortune to "good women" and should therefore not be sung outside brothels. On the other end of the stylistic spectrum, Set 3 includes a mournful art song "*Tou Fa Sin*" ("Peach Blossom Fan"), sung in the lyrical song genre *jyut au* (lit., "Cantonese songs") by the visually impaired songstress Lee Ngan Giu. Made in 1980 at a fundraising radio show (for impoverished blind singers), this precious recording was the last of Lee, showcasing her signature deep and lamenting alto voice (see Yu Siu Wah's essay in the liner notes, pp.10–11, for more on this style).

Each of the eight sets is accompanied by a carefully prepared booklet, which includes well-researched essays and liner notes, as well as exhaustively transcribed lyrics. All texts are printed only in traditional Chinese, and no translation (in English or Chinese) is provided for the Cantonese lyrics—which may indicate that the collection aims to reach primarily in-group, Cantonese-speaking audience in Hong Kong (refer to Ching 2019 and Yung 2009 for two useful English-language essays on Dou Wun and his *naam yam* singing). Listeners may decide on the extent to which the colourful graphics and illustration artwork of the booklets, album cover, and box sets are relevant to the music's ambience and the project's overall vision. The restoration and mastering of the tracks—done by Aik Yew Goh of HUGO Productions—are of consistent and uncompromised

quality. Listeners will enjoy Dou Wun's voice carefully layered against the background "noise" of traffic, chatting, and singing caged birds at the teahouse.

The significance of this collection can hardly be overstated. It represents a crucial addition of Hong Kong's oral poet-singers and their Cantonese ballads to the study of Asian performing arts. Dou Wun's songs will be enjoyed by a broad range of audiences in social history, oral literature, and world music, academic and non-academic alike, and will certainly receive critical attention from the aficionados of traditional southern Chinese art forms. At a time when Hong Kong's politico-cultural identity crisis exacerbates, and as a deep sense of nostalgia permeates the ex-colony's social and aesthetic life, the collection contributes to—and is enthusiastically welcomed by—a bottom-up, unofficial project of memory-making. As they circulate widely on the internet, these tracks seem to have fuelled a cross-generational interest in rediscovering, safeguarding, and reviving this much-cherished sound heritage of the national past. In no small feat, Dou Wun's oral poetry will keep the memory of Hong Kong's bygone past alive for the years to come, and Yung and his team should be credited for their admirable work.

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