

# **Lecture Series on Taiwan's Popular Music (Masaryk University)**

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Taiwan, which is officially the Republic of China (ROC) — and although initially home to an Austronesian (indigenous) population—went through various waves of Chinese migration throughout history. Going through European (Dutch and Spanish) colonisation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, then Japanese colonisation (1895-1945), Taiwan's popular music has received strong musical influences from Japan, USA, regional musics in China and the indigenous cultures in Taiwan. With a population of 23 million, which is smaller than many neighbouring states, Taiwan was the second largest music market in Asia—and second to Japan in the 1990s— and has been one of the primary providers of music repertoire to the Sinophone world.

Taiwan's influence on popular music and culture in the People's Republic of China (PRC), along with its impact on the Chinese diaspora, is significant. This lecture series will introduce Taiwan's popular music— with a particular focus on popular music after the 1970s to recently— to the students while examining the social, political and cultural influences on the production and consumption of music, as well as how popular music shapes society, locally, regionally and transnationally. Every lecture will include at least one case study of artists or groups to enhance the student's understanding of Taiwan's popular music scenes.

## **Aims**

- To introduce students the key artists, genres and historical events significant to Taiwan's popular music.
- To introduce students to the dynamics of social, cultural and historical influences that give shape to the development of Taiwan's popular music.
- To enhance the student's understanding of the cultural and economic importance of music and introduce them approaches to studying popular music.
- To broaden student's perspective and ability to reflect critically on the different popular musical cultures including the student's own popular culture/music.
- To develop the students' transferable skills in critical thought, communication, presentation and writing.

## **Learning Outcomes**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the key artists, genres and historical events significant to Taiwan's popular music.

- Demonstrate an awareness of the dynamics of social, cultural and historical influences that give shape to the development of Taiwan's popular music.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural and economic importance of music and introduce them to different approaches to studying popular music
- Demonstrate a comparative perspective and ability to reflect critically on the different popular musical cultures, including the student's own popular culture/music.
- Demonstrate transferable skills in critical thought, communication, presentation and writing.

The teaching itinerary is April 23 (Tuesday) - April 29 (Monday) - 5 days.  
Every day it is 2 x 90 minutes of teaching.

## **23<sup>rd</sup> April**

### **Lecture 1. Taiwan's Popular Music: Industry and History**

This lecture will introduce the series. It will, therefore, cover the planning of the timetable and the final assessment. As the first lecture of the whole series, it will introduce the meanings and debates surrounding 'popular music' and provide a brief overview of key scholarship and analysis in the area of popular music studies. It will then move to give an overview of the history, geopolitics, and socio-economical context of contemporary Taiwan. The importance of studying Taiwan's popular music will also be introduced. It will then move on to discuss the historical development of Taiwan's music industry from the period of Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945), to the martial law period under the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party) rule, to its democratisation in the 1980s.

#### **Case study:**

**Copyright dispute about Difang Duana's 'Elders Drinking Song' and Enigma's 'Return of the Innocence' at Olympics 1996 at Atlanta, USA.**

### **Lecture 2. Taiwan's Popular Music: Genres**

This lecture will introduce some genres, such as Mandopop (Mandarin popular music), Taiyupop (Taiyu popular songs), styles (Ballad, China Wind Pop) and artists (Teresa Tang, Jay Chou, A-Mei Chang) in Taiwan's popular music. This lecture will also include the screening of a short documentary film entitled 'Chasing the China Wind: A Musical Journey' (1996) followed by discussions. This documentary focuses on a trend around the 2000s. It explores the sense of Chineseness that has been constructed in 'China Wind' (zhongguofeng) music. It also examines how Taiwanese pop star Jay Chou gained success culturally and commercially in China and beyond. This documentary explores the musical memories of Post-90s Generation across

Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and the UK. It also explores the ways audiences engage with China Wind music. What emerges is a constant negotiation of Chineseness that takes place in both the creation and consumption of music.

**Activities: Chasing the China Wind: A Musical Journey film screening**

**24<sup>th</sup> April**

### **Lecture 3. Taiwan's Popular Music: Politics and Censorship**

Taiwan's recording industry was established during the Japanese colonisation around the 1930s. At the time, it was mostly Taiyupop that was recorded and released. While the Japanese rulers set out to carefully strengthen the concept of Kominka—a measure implemented in 1937 to force the Taiwanese to become 'imperial citizens'—music was also subjected to censorship. After the KMT government ruled the island, under martial law, the Government Information Office (GIO) also set up a workforce to provide music industry guidelines on music censorship. The martial law period (1949-1987) has had an enduring influence on Taiwan's popular music. The KMT's strategic censorship and language policy have led to the growth of Mandopop and the decline of Taiyupop. Furthermore, we see the growing market in the PRC shaping some of the developments of Mandarin popular music. This lecture will cover how music censorship and politics have continuously shaped and influenced the production and consumption of popular music in Taiwan. Songs that have been banned by different regimes for various reasons, such as 'Flower in a Rainy Night' and 'When Will You Come Again?', will be key case studies.

**Case Study:**

**Flower in a Rainy Night (1933)**

**When Will You Come Again? (1937)**

### **Lecture 4. Taiwan's Popular Music: Policy and Awards**

In the 1990s, the Government Information Office (GIO) established the Golden Melody Awards (GMA, 金曲獎)—an influential music award now known as the Grammys of the Chinese-speaking world. After the Ministry of Culture (MOC) was established in 2012, it took over the supervision for GMA and established Golden Indie Melody Awards (GIMA, 金音獎), as well as the Taiwan Music Composition and Songwriting Contest (台灣原創流行音樂大賞). Both local and central governments have sponsored music events and production to reclaim the status of Taiwan as a significant site for musical export. These policies have been controversial.

By providing a case study and fieldwork on GMA, this lecture will focus on how politics—domestic, cross-strait, regional and international—has influenced Taiwan’s music. How this policy has switched from censoring music to supporting the industry as a promotion of economy and soft power will also be introduced. The issues of what type of music should be promoted by the State and how it should be decided has been widely debated, and this lecture will give an overview of these debates and arguments.

**Case Study:**

**Sheng Xiang & Band’s ‘Besieged Village’ (2016)**

**25<sup>th</sup> April**

**Lecture 5. Taiwan’s Popular Music: Activism and Social Movements**

After the lifting of martial law, a ‘democratic taste’ (Ho, 2003) has developed in Taiwan’s popular music. Music has always been a key component in social movements to mobilise political participation. Several movements marked the significant development in Taiwan’s democratisation. In the 1970s, activists in Taiwan strived to push for press freedom; in 1990, protesters sought direct elections and democratisation in the Wild Lily Student Movement. In March 2014, The Sunflower Student Movement broke out. The activists protested the passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) at the legislature without clause-by-clause review. In February 2017, the Indigenous Ketagalan Boulevard Protest started pressing for more official recognition of land as traditional territories. Each of these movements is linked to music, and some movements, such as the Sunflower Movement, has an unofficial anthem. This lecture will cover the use of music across social movements in Taiwan, and examine how different protest songs have been associated with social movements through context. ‘Island’s Sunrise’(島嶼天光) by Fire Ex. (滅火器), written for the Sunflower Movement will be a key case study in this lecture.

**Case Study:**

**Fire Ex.’s ‘Island’s Sunrise’**

**Lecture 6. Taiwan’s Popular Music: Locating Taiwan in Asia and the Sinophone world**

In the 1990s, Taiwan's music market was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in Asia. It was also the home to the largest Asian label, Rock Records (滾石唱片). This lecture will analyse how this small island nation was able to reach out to many markets by introducing theoretical notions, such as Inter-Asian referencing (Iwabuchi, 2013) and the Sinophone (Shih, 2007). These are useful to comprehend the meanings of the complex cultural and economic flows as well as regional dynamics.

Rock band Mayday (五月天) will be the key study in this lecture. Having been active for more than 20 years, the Taiwanese band Mayday is referred to as 'the Beatles in the Chinese-speaking world' and the 'Kings of Concerts' by various international media (BBC, CNN). Mayday started their career from a rebellious indie band singing in Taiyu in 1998, signed to Rock Records, and gradually transformed into a band known for its pop-rock Mandarin ballads that sing of dreams and hope. How Taiwanese artists like Mayday developed their career and fan base strategically, will be covered in this lecture. How their music reflects themes that Inter-Asian fan communities can identify with will also be discussed too.

### **Case Study: Mayday and their 'Life' tour**

## **26<sup>th</sup> April**

### **Lecture 7. Taiwan's Indie Music and the Concept of 'Independence.'**

After 2000, the global music industry has undergone a drastic transformation caused by digitalisation. The Big Five were no longer the only players who could afford to make records and distribute music. Because of this transformation, micro-independents (Strachan, 2007) thrived in these music markets. This lecture will, firstly, introduce the concept of 'indie' and 'independent' and in what way it is different from that in the Anglo-American music market. Focusing on independent musicians, such as No Party for Cao Dong (草東沒有派對) and ChthoniC (閃靈), this lecture will examine how Taiwanese musicians in this new era seek to engage with a larger audience base internationally. This will take place through probing two common approaches for internationalisation, and how musicians strive to gain 'independence'. These approaches include obtaining public funding and projects, and extensive music cooperation with musicians and labels internationally, particularly the neighbouring states. Through participant observation at showcases and conducting interviews with these musicians—and long with key industry practitioners and government officials—this lecture will identify the issues Taiwanese musicians encounter while reaching out to the international markets today.

### **Case Study:**

### **No Party for Cao Dong and ChthoniC**

## **Lecture 8. Conclusions: Why Do Studies of Popular Music Matter in Taiwan and What Can It Do?**

This lecture will wrap up the lecture series by revisiting key debates in the study of music, from text to cultures, from ‘popular’ to the ‘traditional’. This lecture will identify the key issues to be continuously explored while understanding Taiwan’s popular music, including policy, cross-strait relations, re-positioning of Taiwan and so on. It will wrap up through examining a case study on the career of Taiwanese indigenous musician Ayal Komod— whose Chinese name is A-yue Chang (張震嶽)— and how his various music styles reflect various issues discussed in the whole lecture series. The final hour of the lecture will be open for questions about presentations and essay plans. Before the end of the lecture, a timetable of topics for final presentations will be created.

### **Case Study: Ayal Komod/A-Yue**

## **29<sup>th</sup> April**

### **Presentations and Final Notes**

Undergraduate students: 10-min presentations (2 people in a group, with an outline or file of PowerPoint slides, a short paragraph on how the tasks were assigned)

Master students: 800-1000 word essay

### **Assessment**

Answer one of the questions listed below, focusing on one song, album, or an artist from Taiwan or has developed their career in Taiwan.

1. How do global influences and local adaptations give shape to its creative processes and musical outputs?
2. How do local or international politics influence the artistic process?
3. How has technology contributed to its production and consumption?

### **Short Bio**

Dr Chen-Yu LIN is Research Associate and Lecturer (fixed-term) in the Institute of Popular Music (IPM), Department of Music at the University of Liverpool. She received her PhD on perceptions of Chineseness in China Wind pop music across

Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and the UK in 2018 in the same institute. Her research interests include Mandarin popular music, music censorship, music and place. She is also an award documentary producer who actively incorporates filmmaking and screening as research methods. Her film *Chasing the China Wind: A Musical Journey* was shortlisted for Utopian Award in AHRC Research in Film Awards 2016; *George Harrison: The Story of the Beatles and Indian Music Performance Teaser* was shortlisted for Short-Media Award in AHRC Research in Film Awards 2018. She has received the first prize of Young Scholar Award of European Association of Taiwan Studies in 2018.