

COLORS OF THE NORTH: PORTRAITS OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

For the past five years **Victoria Vorrieter** has trekked the far corners of the Golden Triangle documenting the musical and cultural heritage of its 130 different ethnic groups and sub-groups. Below she explains what led her to pursue this project

As a violinist and music teacher, I am keenly aware that music is able to touch us in profound and mysterious ways. My training in Western classical music though left me with some sobering realizations.

Somehow I was missing the pri-

mal beat that could move me in my deepest core and that resonated the ancestral melodies of my own tribe. It also became apparent how few people actually make music anymore in my culture. For most, music has become a spectator experience that is non-participatory.

When I took a foreign study course in Marrakech some years ago I was





the world, and in 2000 the Resonance Project was created as a nonprofit organization dedicated to documenting the ancient ceremonies and music of indigenous peoples.

What began as a series of independent documentary films formatted for public television, has grown over the years into a more inclusive body of archival work – films, books, CDs, photos and museum collections – the intent of which is to provide a vivid testament to cultural observances and values around the world.

The Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia, a region that harbors over 130 different groups and subgroups, proved to be the perfect ‘next stop.’ This crossroads at the base of the Himalayas makes for one of the most culturally remarkable places on the planet, which is reflected in the rich multiplicity of history, language, customs, arts, religion, dress, and features.

No less astounding is the diversity of musical traditions. Living in nature and rooted in animism, these mountain peoples have developed a vast repertoire of celebratory songs, sacred chants, and instrumental music that is ever-present and vital to their lives.

Since I moved to Chiang Mai in 2005, I have been trekking to remote villages in Laos, Myanmar, China and Thailand to document these traditional songs and ceremonies. Now after five humbling, challenging and joyous years of fieldwork, writing, editing and curating, my archival project is at last coming out into the world in a variety of forms: documentary films, several distinctive photography exhibits, a Songs of Memory book, CD, and museum exhibition.

thrilled to witness firsthand the wildly original ways that traditional peoples express themselves through sound and how these are fully interwoven into their lives and communities.

Paul Bowles, American composer and author best known for his masterpiece, ‘The Sheltering Sky,’ who for decades lived in Tangier, became a great inspiration to me.

During the 1960’s Bowles traveled throughout Morocco, creating the first field recordings of tribal music, a collection commissioned by the Library of Congress. I decided to follow in his footsteps, seeking to document the traditional melodies and rhythms through film, which resulted in a one-hour documentary, ‘The Music of Morocco and the Cycles of Life.’

The excitement and passion I felt from this project compelled me to continue this life work in other parts of

First launched at the Jim Thompson Arts Centre in Bangkok in 2009, the Songs of Memory multi-media museum exhibition traveled to the Chiang Mai Arts and Cultural Centre the following year with an expanded design. This exhibit was brought to life by the Tribal Wisdom Symposium, a dynamic series of lectures, demonstrations, concerts, curator walks, and special seminars for young people, meant to create an interactive experience, bringing people together while revealing the wisdom, integrity and beauty of tribal culture.

Looking to the future, there are many projects planned in the coming years. I will create a series of 20 educational films, with full translations and researched narratives. From my 250 hours of footage I will edit a one-hour documentary film, ‘The Music of the Golden Triangle and the Cycles of Life,’ formatted for public television. And I am very much looking forward to shepherding the Songs of Memory museum exhibition to other venues throughout the world, so that an international audience can experience these musical treasures.



More of Victoria’s work can be viewed at: www.tribalmusicasia.com

A photo exhibition from her travails, *Colors of the North, Portraits of the Golden triangle*, will be held at the Anantara Resort and Spa from 22nd to 24th October as part of the Music and Arts Festival Chiang Rai 2010.

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Portraits of the Golden Triangle

A Photo Exhibition by Victoria Vorreiter
 Celebrating the Diversity of Tribal Culture
 22 October 2010 – 22 January 2011

“สี่แสนชีวิต
 ชาวสามเหลี่ยม
 ทองคำ”

นิทรรศการภาพถ่ายโดย Victoria Vorreiter
 22 ตุลาคม 2553 – 22 มกราคม 2554