

## ***Learn Mandarin Chinese through Chinese Children's Songs***

**Emma Lee**

Sinonexus Publishing Company, Bellingham, MA, \$49.95, (176p)

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Emma Lee, who has a great deal of extensive experience teaching Mandarin Chinese to non-native speakers, wanted to provide books that would offer students not only language instruction, but also a glimpse into the heart of China. With that goal in mind, she has delved into the children's music of China to create her book *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Chinese Children's Songs*, which is accompanied by 3 cd's.

Lee begins with an introduction to Mandarin Chinese. She discusses "Romanizing" systems (those that translate Chinese characters in a manner that allows Western students to pronounce them), and provides a comparison of the most prominent systems. She then introduces students to initials, finals, and tones. A brief review of the stroke order for Mandarin Phonetic Symbols (MPS) and a chart showing the origin of MPS follow.

The songs are set up using line-by-line comparison. Each line is written first in MPS, then traditional Chinese characters, simplified Characters, the Pinyin system (a Romanization system), MPS II (another Romanization system), word-for-word English translation, and a full sentence English translation. Thus students can see how both traditional and simplified written characters are pronounced (using MPS, Pinyin, or MPS II) and translated.

Music provides a potent bridge between cultures, and Lee has harnessed some of its power in this collection. Accompanied by three CDs, the book includes 61 songs from China and Taiwan as well as notes on their origins and composers. These notes provide a window into Chinese culture; many discuss historical events from the time of the song's writing. Lee's own pride in Taiwan is obvious in some of these asides. Songs are charmingly illustrated by naïve drawings from Lee's then eight-year-old daughter.

*Learn Mandarin Chinese through Chinese Children's Songs* is an ideal supplement to a regular introductory text, as is its companion volume *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Children's Songs from Around the World*. Containing as they do both pronunciations and translations, these CD and book sets allow students to use music to aid in learning and retention. Students will also appreciate the insights that Lee's research provides into the history and culture of China.

EMMA LEE, a resident of Massachusetts since 1986, has a degree in Chinese literature and a graduate degree in English. She has been teaching Mandarin Chinese since 1996 and has written three books on learning Mandarin. She is currently teaching at historic Thayer Academy near Boston and working on her next book project on Chinese characters.

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