

Songs of Memory
Traditional Music of the Golden Triangle
A Presentation by Victoria Vorreiter



High in the mountains of the Golden Triangle, where Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar once knew no boundaries, lives a rich multiplicity of traditional peoples. Prominent among them are the Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Hmong, Mien, and Karen, six distinct groups who have maintained their independence and identity to a high degree. Each represents an extraordinary world, unique in history, language, customs, arts, religion, dress, and features. No less astounding is the diversity of their musical traditions. Living in nature and rooted in animism, these mountain peoples have developed a vast repertory of songs, sacred chants, and instrumental music that is ever-present and vital to their lives.

The keepers of the bardic tradition—the master musicians, shamans, headmen, matriarchs and patriarchs—use their rich trove of songs, legends, and rituals to connect people with something greater than themselves. Music, when supported by age-old enactments and decorum, anchors members of a community to their life-source. It reunites them with their ancestors and aligns them with their deities. Ceremonies and songs remind people of their origins and preserve collective memory. Music promotes a sense of communal harmony by instilling identity and belonging. Songs are the chronicles and oracles of time-honored ways of life.

Victoria Vorreiter, an American researcher, photographer, and filmmaker, highlights the traditional music, ceremonies, and culture of the Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Hmong, Mien, and Karen through **Songs of Memory: Traditional Music of the Golden Triangle**, a dynamic presentation, enhanced by photographs and recordings, which complements her richly illustrated book and compact disc of the same name.

Victoria's life in music has taken several forms in search of the heart response to melody and rhythm. Trained as a classical violinist, she has performed professionally and taught at universities and music schools around the world. These experiences propelled her to explore and document the cultural importance and primal power of music embedded in all civilizations.

After creating her first film, **The Music of Morocco and the Cycles of Life** (2002), Victoria moved to Southeast Asia, where she has spent over a decade documenting the ancestral music of highland communities in Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and China. This has given rise to the **Songs of Memory** (2009) and the **Hmong Songs of Memory** (2016) archival projects—books, films, recordings, and multi-media exhibitions that are brought to life by vivid photographs, musical instruments, artifacts, and textiles.