The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about music

歌 = 唱 (chang) = sing. 歌 = 曲 (qu) = song. 聲樂 (sheng yue = voice-music) = vocal music. 獨唱 (du chang = alone-sing) = solo, 合唱 (he chang = join-sing) = unison/chorus. 歌詞 (ge ci = song-words/poem) means libretti/lyrics.

歌伎 (ge ji = song-courtesans) are old-time song-stresses. 民歌手 (min ge shou = people-song-hand) are folk-singers. 流行樂隊 (liu xing yue dui = flow-current-music-team) = pop group. Eulogies are 頌歌 (song ge = praise-song), elegies/dirges are 轋歌 (wan ge = lament-song). 藝歌 (yi ge = art songs) means lieder, chansons. 歌后 (ge hou = song-queen) means divas, e.g. Maria Callas.

月下情歌 (yue xia qing ge = moon-under-emotion/love-song) means moonlight serenading.

Pronunciation: ge (Putonghua, 1st tone), goh (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: song, sing

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