

LISTENING TO MUSIC: PEOPLE, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

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Listening in semi-colonial Shanghai: the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra and its Chinese audience in the 1920s

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Abstract

The Shanghai Municipal Orchestra was one of the earliest western orchestras in China. It started as a wind band in 1879, when part of Shanghai was occupied by the western powers. The band initially served the western community by performing light music in the Public Garden and playing martial music in the military parades. A Chinese audience was almost absent in these musical activities, since western music was foreign to them. The existence/non-existence of western and Chinese audiences echoes Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social distinction, which suggests that accessibility to culture differentiates social status.

This chapter examines the emergence of a Chinese audience for the orchestra through the writings of Chinese critics. It begins with a discussion by Xiao Youmei (1884–1940),

the principal of the National Conservatory of Music, of the reasons for the absence of a Chinese audience. We shall then see how and why the Chinese critics had expended so much effort in promoting western music in the Chinese community. While writing about their personal experience and the behaviour of other Chinese audiences, these critics also compared Chinese and western music and expressed their admiration of western culture after attending the concerts. These writings record the first attempt of the Chinese in crossing social and cultural boundaries.

Introduction

In 1843, the earliest batch of foreign residents arrived in Shanghai after the end of the First Opium War (also the First Anglo–Chinese War, 1839–42), which was concluded by the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. Under the treaty, Shanghai and four other Chinese cities, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou and Ningbo, were opened to Britain as treaty ports. In the next two decades, Shanghai witnessed the establishment and expansion of the British concession, American concession and French concession, as well as the merging of American and British concessions into the International Settlement.

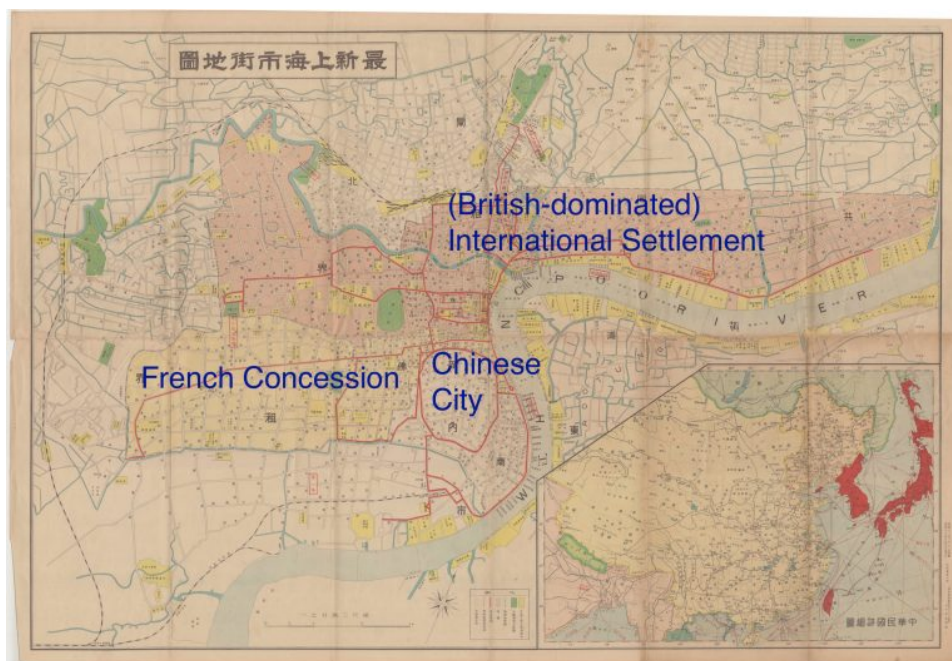


Figure 1: Map of Shanghai, 1937 (Source: <http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Maps/Collection>, accessed 21 June 2017)

Foreigners living in Shanghai assumed a special status in the city and were ruled or 'protected' under the law of their own countries. The British and French were the two dominating forces in this region and they formed two separate councils, which were independent of the Chinese Manchurian Government. The Municipal Council

dominated by the British was set up in 1854 and continued until 1943, while the French Consul-General created the Municipal Administrative Council in 1862 to preserve the independence of the French concession. Jürgen Osterhammel suggests 'semi-colonialism' as a phenomenon where the weaker government retains only nominal ownership but effectively loses control of its territory to the colonial power.¹ The political situation of Shanghai meets the definition, since the Chinese Manchurian Government, although conceding part of the city to the western powers, remained as an independent polity. Shi Shumei further explains that the divided foreign concessions administered by multiple western powers (mainly British, French and American in Shanghai) is one of the key features of 'semi-colonialism'.²

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the characteristics of semi-colonialism through the Chinese audience of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, one of the earliest western orchestras in China. I will begin with the concept of semi-colonialism and the historical background of the orchestra. Then we shall examine the writings of different people who attended the Municipal Orchestra concerts. These writings will give us the reasons for the absence of a Chinese audience in the early years of the orchestra, the effort of the Chinese critics in promoting western music in the Chinese community, and different views on western art music among the Chinese in the mid-1920s.

The concept of semi-colonialism

The main theme of this study is semi-colonialism. To begin with, a survey of the meaning of a few related terms, such as 'imperialism' and 'colonialism', will provide a useful ground for the discussion. According to Edward Said, 'imperialism' is the 'practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory' and 'colonialism' is 'the implanting of settlements on distant territory' as a consequence of imperialism.³ This concept becomes the point of departure when semi-colonialism is discussed in this chapter. The next question would then be the difference between 'colonialism' and 'semi-colonialism'. Here, Hobsbawm's *The Age of Empire* is taken as a reference. He explains that empires are 'territories under the formal rule or informal political domination [i.e. zones of influence]' of another state.⁴ This elaboration on the one hand suggests the importance of considering 'political significance' in our understanding of these terms and on the other brings out the significance of the term 'informal empire', which is inextricable from the concept of semi-colonialism.

In *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Osterhammel offers a useful classification of three different forms of colonialism: 1) colonial rule, 2) quasi-colonial control and 3) non-colonial determinant influence.⁵ These categories sub-divide different forms of colonialism according to the power relationship between the ruling and ruled countries. In colonial rule, '[i]ndigenous rulers are replaced by foreign rulers' and this results in the establishment of a formal empire.⁶ This form of colonialism can be illustrated by the control exercised by the British Government over India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the second type, quasi-colonial control, '[t]he weaker state remains intact as an independent polity with its own political system. ... There is no colonial administration, but occasionally especially in the area of finance – a mixture of foreign and indigenous administration.'⁷ Osterhammel suggests that the formation of informal empire as a result of this quasi-colonial control is more or less an economic phenomenon: 'Informal empire, unlike colonialism (formal empire), presupposes a distinct economic superiority of Big Brother.'⁸ Robert Aguirre uses the term to describe the relationship between Britain and nineteenth-century Mexico and Central America, that is, the period after the independence of Mexico from Spain until the Spanish-American War in 1898, when British influence gradually diminished. He explains that 'Britain's primary interests in the region were driven by exchange, trade, and commerce' and it 'formally recognized the political independence of the Latin American republic ... by signing commercial treaties.'⁹ British imperialism did not originate in a master plan to occupy the territory, and the imperial practices in the region were 'conflictual, contingent, heterogeneous, and partial' in quality.¹⁰ As to the last form of colonialism, non-colonial 'determinant' influence, 'the economic superiority of the stronger national partner or of its private enterprise and/or its military protective function confers upon it opportunities to influence the politics of the weaker partner.'¹¹ Here, the discussion of 'quasi-colonial control' is the most relevant to the foreign administration of the concessions in Shanghai. In fact, Osterhammel has used the term 'semi-colonialism' to describe the political and social situation of China in a book chapter, where he attempted to develop an analytical framework.¹² His model, however, mainly focuses on the political and economic aspects of the society, rather than the cultural dimension.

On the cultural facet of semi-colonialism in China, Shi Shumei provides a more thorough discussion in her book, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937*. Her explanation is particularly instrumental for this study. She uses the term 'semi-colonialism' to 'describe the specific effects of multiple imperialist presences in China and their fragmentary colonial geography (largely confined to coastal cities) and control, as well as the resulting social and cultural formations.'¹³ China, which conceded its control over many of its cities during the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, illustrated certain features of semi-colonialism: the 'rivalry' and 'co-operation' among the foreign powers, the multiple, layered, intensified, incomplete and fragmentary nature of the colonial administration, a lack of cohesion and an abundance of strife within the cultural sphere, and the diverse responses of the Chinese towards semi-colonialism.¹⁴ This chapter will examine the writings of Chinese intellectuals in order to obtain an understanding of their ideological, political, and cultural positions within the semi-colonial setting.

To divert slightly from the current topic, Shi brought out the notion of asymmetric cosmopolitanism in her discussion and proposed that it is an intermediary in the social transformation of a city from the ideology of semi-colonialism to cosmopolitanism. She explains that '[w]hen applied to Third World intellectuals, 'cosmopolitanism' implies that these individuals have an expansive knowledge constituted primarily by their understanding of the world (read: the West), but when applied to metropolitan western intellectuals there is a conspicuous absence of the demand to know the non-West.'¹⁵ When this is applied to the case of China, we shall notice that Shanghai actually underwent a social transformation from a semi-colonial to an asymmetric cosmopolitan city before moving towards a cosmopolitan metropolis, since the Chinese were initially neglected in the settlers' concept of 'cosmopolitanism'.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'semi-colonialism' is defined as a concept that grows out of Hobsbawm's 'informal political domination' and Osterhammel's 'informal empire.' Semi-colonialism will be viewed as an ideology that facilitated Shanghai's development towards cosmopolitanism in the twentieth century. Initially, the transformation began with asymmetric cosmopolitanism where the Chinese were not involved. Cosmopolitanism gradually became the shared value in the settlement when the Chinese were included in the semi-colonial hierarchy in the 1930s. This chapter will focus on the emergence of the Chinese audience in the performances of the municipal orchestra since the 1920s.

A history of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra

The Shanghai Municipal Orchestra began as a wind band in 1879, consisting of fourteen Filipino bandmen led by the French bandmaster Jean Rémusat (1815–80).¹⁶ It was financed by the British-dominated Shanghai Municipal Council and the French Municipal Administrative Council since 1881; and was managed by a Band and Orchestra Committee (thereafter 'Band Committee'). The orchestra was an important cultural institution in semi-colonial Shanghai, as it was the one with the longest history

in China and was omnipresent in many social and cultural activities of the settlement. Its 64-year history can be divided into three stages: the formative years (1879–1906) when it was a brass band; the transitional period (1906–19), which witnessed its growth into a symphony orchestra; and the matured period (1919–42).

The orchestra began as a wind band serving the parade of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, a military force formed by the Municipal Council in 1853 for defending the settlement.^[17] In the parade the rangers, artilleries and infantries marched along the main streets of the settlement, and the public band accompanied the procession with martial music. The band also entertained the foreign community with light, popular dance tunes and opera medleys in open-air concerts and at private functions. In 1906, the Band Committee proposed to reconstruct the band by transforming it into a municipal orchestra. With the effort of two conductors, Rudolf Buck (1866–1952) and later Mario Paci (1878–1946), the orchestra was once known as ‘the best orchestra in the Far East’.^[18] By the mid-1930s, the Municipal Orchestra consisted of over 30 members from Russia, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Philippines, Japan and China. It also expanded the repertory to include the orchestral and chamber works from the Baroque to the modern period. As reported in *The Musical Quarterly* in 1935, the orchestra’s programmes comprised ‘works of Respighi, Rieti, Malipiero, de Falla, Ravel, Kodaly, Bartok, Graener [and] Hindemith.’^[19]

The orchestra offered many different types of performances, which can be grouped into three main categories: regular concerts; accompaniment in the military parades; and private engagements. At the inception period, the public band performed several times a week during the summer in public gardens to entertain the foreign residents. This tradition was maintained even when the band was expanded into a municipal orchestra in the early twentieth century. Music in the open-air concerts was played by the wind band and was generally light-hearted in nature. As the orchestra grew, it also offered some easy-listening orchestral pieces in these outdoor performances to raise public interest. In 1899, the erection of the Town Hall in Shanghai provided the first indoor venue for regular concerts during the winter concert season. In addition to the weekly symphonic concerts, the orchestra had also offered educational concerts, subscription concerts, chamber concerts and dance music concerts since the beginning of the twentieth century. As discussed, the orchestra was initially created for the military parade. This function also remained, even when the band was later developed into a symphonic orchestra. To increase its income, the orchestra also engaged in other performances, such as accompanying the theatrical productions of the local drama clubs and visiting opera troupes. Sometimes, ensembles were formed by members of the orchestra for playing in private or social functions. In this chapter, I

will focus on the regular concerts, as they had the broadest reach in the settlement and draw the most attention in today's literature on the orchestra.

The Shanghai Municipal Orchestra is considered a semi-colonial construct for several reasons. The orchestra was managed by the Band Committee and was mainly financed by the Municipal Council, which made it a good representation of the settlers. Through the music it played, the orchestra became a useful tool for circulating the voices of the colonisers. Although the British dominated both the council and the orchestra, membership of the management was multinational, suggesting that the voice was not necessarily monolithic. Initially, the players of the orchestra were recruited from the Philippines, rather than China, and were trained by the European bandmasters. This suggests that the settlers did not intend to impose western culture and values on the Chinese people by forcing them to learn western music. The primary purpose of the orchestra was to serve the settlers' community, and the Chinese were almost ignored in the conception of the foreign settlers. On the other hand, the exclusiveness of the western cultural activity seems to allude to the supremacy of its participants. While most Chinese were indifferent to what the foreigners did, some others were made to believe that the ability to comprehend or even play western music would elevate their social status. Here, the belief in western superiority was induced, rather than imposed in a strong and direct manner by the foreign residents. The Municipal Orchestra, as a tool serving the settlers, became an institution reflecting 'semi-colonialism' in Shanghai under this context.

Current literature on the orchestra generally pays more attention to the western side of the story by focusing on the western musicians, the Municipal Council's financing of the orchestra, and the contribution of Paci in recruiting the Chinese musicians to the orchestra. This chapter attempts to broaden the existing research on this topic by bringing in the voice of the Chinese audience. It will focus on the indoor concerts in the 1920s, the early years of its matured period when the Chinese audience started to grow in number. I will propose that the reaction of the Chinese audience, in addition to other personnel associated with the orchestra such as the conductors and players, would enhance our further understanding of semi-colonialism in Shanghai.

Chinese audience – from absence to presence

The Chinese were almost absent in the early years of the Municipal Orchestra concerts, despite the limited records about the appearance of Chinese officials and local amahs accompanying their European masters in the open-air concerts in the late nineteenth

century.²⁰ Other early records on the Chinese audience were unavailable until Tanabe Hisao, a Japanese musicologist, wrote about a concert he attended in 1923:

There were 500–600 guests in the hall that evening, making the room quite full. However, it seemed that most of them were Westerners; about 10% were Japanese, and only 10 Chinese individuals were in attendance. So one might conclude that Chinese people’s interest in Western music was rather limited at that time.

(少しここで、このタウンホールの演奏会における聴衆は約五、六百名あったらしいが、その大部分は西洋人で、日本人は一割くらい、中国人はわずかに十名余りに過ぎなかったらしく見受けられた。これを見ても当時の中国人が、西洋音楽を理解する程度はかなり低いということが知られる。)²¹

One important obstacle that hindered the Chinese from accessing the concerts is that they were not allowed to enter the Public Gardens where open-air concerts were given. Lacking the opportunity to hear western music through the cheap outdoor concerts made it even more improbable for the general Chinese to buy tickets to the indoor concerts, since they had no reason to pay for music with which they were not acquainted. Xiao Youmei, the President of the National Conservatory of Music, noted the reasons for people’s reluctance to attend western music concerts:

... but the majority of attendants of the concerts are still foreigners. The Chinese did not even constitute 10% [of the audience]. What are the reasons? I think there are no more than the following two reasons. First, they did not know about this type of opportunity; second, although they know about it or have attended and listened to [the concert], the music played is too difficult to comprehend and so they would rather not attend the concert again.

(但是去聽音樂的還是外人占大多數，中國人尚不及十分之一，這是什麼緣故呢？我想不出下列兩個理由：第一，是不知道有這種機會；第二，是雖然知道或者已經去聽過而因為他們所奏的音樂過於高深不能領略，所以寧可犧牲不再去聽。)²²

Therefore, when the restriction on park access was removed by the Municipal Council in 1928, the situation changed. The opening of the public parks to the Chinese meant

that approval was granted to the Chinese for attending the summer concerts. It appeared that the Chinese were gradually accepted as part of the settlement community and were allowed to participate in social and cultural activities previously exclusive to the foreign residents.

Although the setting of open-air concerts was less formal than that of indoor concerts, the opportunity to attend outdoor performances would actually help to promote the latter. As Xiao suggested:

... many new musical compositions require repeated listening. After continuous training of the ears, one would be able to appreciate their merits.

(有許多新音樂，要常常去聽，耳朵常常受他的薰陶之後，方可領略到他的好處。) ²³

The Chinese were given admission tickets to make their first step to cross the cultural borders and familiarise themselves with western musical culture. The increasing contact with western music through the outdoor concerts would make them less resistant to the indoor concerts, since the biggest hurdle for the Chinese was probably their unfamiliarity with the sonority of western music.

On the other hand, interest in western music actually had existed among the Chinese elites in the early 1920s, although written evidence is limited. Zhang Ruogu (1905–67), a freelance critic of *Shen bao* (a popular Chinese newspaper), noted the presence of a Chinese audience in a Municipal Orchestra concert in 1926:

Recently in the venue of the Town Hall concerts, there have also been many Chinese listeners. I recalled that in the fifteenth concert last Sunday, except for the students in the gallery – those from several local universities and institutions [names omitted here], who frequently attended the concerts, there were unexpectedly also tens of Chinese buying tickets and sitting in the stalls. What's more is that they were the literati famous in Shanghai. This is exactly a good phenomenon for the future of arts in China.

(近來市政廳音樂會中，也有很多中國的聽客了。記得上星期日第十五次音樂會，除樓上有常到的藝大、美專、同文、震旦，各學校一部

份學生外，樓下居然也有數十位中國人買了票子入場的，而且都是上海很知名的文藝家。這正是中國藝術前途的一個好現象啊。)²⁴

Voices from the Chinese audience

By that time, Zhang and some other critics had made much effort in promoting both the indoor and outdoor concerts to the general Chinese public. In 1923, for instance, a music journal in Chinese, *Yinyue jie* (*Musician's World*), was published. The first issue includes an introduction to the Municipal Orchestra concerts. The writer clearly pointed out his purpose of encouraging Chinese participation in these concerts:

In the Municipal Town Hall of Shanghai, from October every year to May of the following year, in every Sunday afternoon between 5–7, there must be a concert given by the orchestra. It is called the symphony concert season. Now for the purpose of promoting our compatriots' interest in the Western high-art music, [I] especially listed below the programmes of the 35th concert on 29 April and 36th concert on 6 May. The conductor is the Italian musician, Paci.

(上海工部局市政廳，每年從十月到次年五月的個個星期日下午，從五時到七時，必定有一個交響樂隊的音樂會。這一種名目，叫交響音樂會時節。現在為鼓吹國人對於西洋上品音樂的興味起見，特將四月二十九日第三十五次音樂會，和五月六日第三十六次音樂會的目次寫在後面。指揮者，意大利樂師巴基。)²⁵

In this section, we shall see some of the writings of these critics, who shared their experience as members of the audience in the Municipal Orchestra concerts.

During 1925–27, Zhang wrote several articles about the Municipal Orchestra concerts in *Shen bao*. In an early piece, he explained the reason for paying so much effort in raising his compatriots' interest in western music:

Up to here when I was writing this article, my friend visited. He asked: 'This type of writing is too much of a promotional advertisement in nature. Do you mean to ask all of our compatriots to study music? I have a further question: What are the benefits of attending the concerts?' I replied with a smile, 'Of

course not everybody has the ability to study music. I do not dare to impose this on other people. But not to study does not mean not to understand or not to like it. ... Men are born to like music, although every person's degree of interest in music, as well as their capability to appreciate music are different. ... As to the benefits of attending concerts, this is mainly for cultivating personality and instigating courage through lyrical and harmonious, magnificent and exciting melodies. To take a look at the Westerners, no matter men or women, old or young, they all have much interest in music. ... If our compatriots can attend Western concerts, they will feel ashamed psychologically. This might be able to encourage them to strengthen themselves. These are the benefits and impacts brought out [by the concerts].'

(書至是，突有友人來訪，見予正在草是篇，因詰難曰：「此類文字太含鼓吹廣告性質，足下殆欲使國人盡嫻習音樂耶？抑予更加有所疑：出席音樂會，究竟有何種裨益？」予笑對曰：「習嫻音樂，固非人人所能，予安敢以是強人，然不嫻習，非不解不好之謂也。……以為生而為人，殆莫不愛好音樂者也。惟各人之趣味有厚薄，賞辨力有強弱之差耳。……至於出席音樂會之裨益，要不外乎借幽悠諧和或雄壯熱烈之音調，以怡養性情激勵心神。蓋觀乎西洋人士，無論男婦老孺對於音樂，皆有甚深之趣味。……且國人能出席於西洋音樂會者，往往能感一種到慚愧心理，或者可以之激勵自起，其裨益影響所及，由於是者矣。」)²⁶

Zhang suggested that music possesses the quality to cultivate people and incite different feelings and emotions – an idea quite consistent with the general belief in the West. In his opinion, the Chinese should therefore share the same interests with the westerners and appreciate the value of western music. By attending the Municipal Orchestra concerts, the general Chinese public would acquire knowledge about other cultures. Western art music would widen their views – western harmony, instruments, musical genres and orchestration – these would make them realise the advancement of western culture and the deficiency of their own culture. This might make them feel ashamed, which would then arouse their eagerness to learn from the West.

In addition to the articles introducing the works performed by the Municipal Orchestra, Zhang also shared every minor detail of his experience as an audience member in another article in 1925:

The venue is the grand meeting room on the second floor [of the Town Hall]. At the entrance, there are Chinese police. After entering, there are two large staircases, each on the left and right wing respectively, where one can select either one for going upstairs. The box office is located there [at the end of the staircase]. ... At the entrance, there are attendants collecting tickets. One can enter and get the programme notes of the concert on that day after presenting one's ticket. In the hall, there are about 1,000 seats, which are free [for the audience] to sit. At the back, there is the gallery, which also has seats like the downstairs. Entrance to upstairs is free of charge, and is accessible by another stair, which is inside a small room next [to the hall]. There are staff holding the programme notes at the end of the staircase. Audience members can obtain a copy from them. However, space in the gallery is small and seats are filled quickly. Latecomers will thus be rejected and have to buy tickets for entry.

Before the concert begins, there is no person on the stage but the chairs, music stands, heavy and bulky instruments. Soon before the performance, all players come out from the resting room on the left and sit in order, then adjust the strings and tuning. When the noise suddenly stops, it is then followed by thunderous applause, because the conductor steps onto the stage.

(會場在二層議事大廳。初入門，有司閤華捕，進則有巨梯二，左右翼峙，可任擇其一，拾級登樓，售券處在焉。……場口有收券員，繳券入場，即得當日樂會節目一冊。場內設位約千座，可任意選坐。後有小樓，設座一如樓下。惟樓上不納資，另有梯盤之，梯在鄰小室內，梯端有人持樂會節目冊者，可向之索取一份。然樓上容地狹隘，易患客滿，後至者不得不享閉門羹而另自購券入場。

開會前，臺上闕空無人，祇設坐椅譜架及重笨樂器等，將奏演，全體奏員，魚貫自左旁代憩室出，依次就坐，理絲整音。已而嘈聲乍寂，掌聲雷動，指揮者登臺矣。) ²⁷

This is not only an account of Zhang's concert going experience; for the Chinese readers, this would also give them a clearer picture about what the Municipal Orchestra concert was like. In comparison to previous articles introducing the concerts, this

sharing probably helped to mitigate people's fear and embarrassment about attending concerts due to ignorance. By publishing the article in *Shen bao*, a more broadly distributed local paper, the message would be able to reach a wider potential audience as well. Here, Zhang took an important step forward in promoting western music to the Chinese community.

The article also manifests how foreign and exclusive the concert was to the Chinese audience. The interior design of the Town Hall, the location of the box office, the Chinese police guarding the hall entrance, the ticket collectors who also distributed the programme notes, where people should be seated, and when they should keep quiet – all of these were unknown to the Chinese who had never attended a concert. In fact, the Chinese audience seemed to ignore western concert etiquette, which made them look silly in front of the westerners. In 1926, Zhang wrote an article to remind people about proper behaviour in concert hall:

I am worried. There are many Chinese who failed to observe the etiquette that they have to follow in public venues. A few rules are especially listed in the following. Attendants of Western concerts must pay attention at all times.

(i) Before entering [the concert venue], if one wears a hat in Western-style, s/he can leave it to the attendants at the entrance and obtain a numbered ticket for claiming back the hat, or s/he can put it next to his/her seat. (ii) Do not speak loudly and gesticulate in the venue. (iii) Do not spit, or throw scraps of paper or skins of food on the floor. (iv) If the performance has already begun, one can wait outside the door for a moment. Do not knock the door and shout. (v) When seated, do not leave the seat arbitrarily and walk outside if the performance on the stage has not yet finished. (vi) If the performance on the stage is excellent, one must wait till the end of the music to applaud. Do not shout in a strange voice. (vii) During the performance, one must keep quiet, do not speak to the neighbouring people. (viii) At the end of the concert, leave the hall in an orderly fashion. Do not run and push, or socialize with friends in the crowd. To conclude, these are common social manners that citizens of a civilized country should have. I very much hope that readers no matter where they are in the public venues, should always follow the above eight rules on concert attendance as a minimum requirement.

(我很擔憂，有許多中國人對於公共場所應守的秩序，恐怕還不能知道，現在特地舉出幾條在下面，務請出席西樂會諸君隨時留意。

(甲)入座前如戴有西式帽者，可脫下交於門外司帽僕役，向之領一號碼，以便隨時核對，或置在自己座旁。(乙)場內切忌高聲譁言及指手劃腳。(丙)切勿吐痰，棄置字紙或食品皮殼於地。(丁)入場時如場內已始奏演，可在門外守待，切勿敲門喊叫。(戊)在座時，如臺上一曲未罷，不得擅行離座外出。(己)於臺上奏演至精彩處，須俟曲終後始可鼓掌，然切勿怪聲叫好。(庚)演奏音樂時當和絨守默靜，不可與旁座談話。(辛)散會時當謹守秩序，先後離場，勿橫衝直撞，在人堆裏招朋呼友。總之，這些是文明國國民應該具有的社會交際常識，我很希望讀者諸君無論在什麼公共場所，常常應該遵守以上所舉最低限度的八條會場須知。)28

If, as Zhang felt, the Chinese could not behave themselves, this would mean that they were less cultivated than, and thus appeared inferior to, westerners. This idea was echoed by Eileen Chang (1920–95) when she wrote about her musical experience in her book *Liuyan (Written on Water)*:

When my mother first took me to a concert, she warned me over and over before we even arrived, 'Whatever happens, don't make a sound, and don't say a thing. Don't let them say Chinese people don't know how to behave properly.' And indeed I sat silently, without so much as moving a muscle, and did not fall asleep.

(我被帶到音樂會裏，預先我母親再三告誡：「絕對不可以出聲說話，不要讓人家罵中國人不守秩序。」果然我始終沉默著，坐在位子上動也不動，也沒有睡著。)29

Here, Chang's writing suggests that the increasing contact of the Chinese with western culture in effect made them believe in their ignorance and their marginality in the settlement's social hierarchy, as well as the backwardness of their artistic development and the less civilised quality of their people.

The sense of shame that Zhang refers to also relates to the view that Chinese music sounds primitive when compared with the complexity of western orchestral music. For the Chinese, western music is more advanced in terms of harmony, instruments, texture, form and design. This point was elaborated in an article printed in *Yinyue jie*, in which the writer expressed his thoughts after attending a concert of the Municipal Orchestra in 1923. He rejected the thought that blindly valued ancient Chinese music

and disdained western music, suggesting that most Chinese should be ashamed of their own music:

A few stubborn audience members, however, shamelessly said, 'Our music in Tang and Sui dynasties [AD 618–907 and AD 518–618 respectively] is no worse than modern Western music. We also invented theory in music harmony before they did. It is a pity that those studies have been lost.' They were only overstating. They were only sighing. They were only worshipping the past. They have never thought of how to revitalize ancient music, however. If they failed to search diligently for the lost treasure, what's the use of sighing?

To criticize fairly, the pentatonic instruments inherited from our ancient past, how would they be comparable to the elegance of the Western instruments? The aforesaid [Chinese] theory, how would it be as accurate as the Western harmony? These hypocritical overstatements do not mean to respect our own country, but are evil fallacies that hinder the study of Western music.

(有幾個頑固的聽眾，却這樣厚顏的說着：「吾國隋唐時的音樂，不會比現在西洋音樂壞；音樂上和聲的理，也比他們發明的早，只可惜研究失傳了。」他們只是誇大，他們只是嗟嘆，他們只是崇古，却並不曾想到怎樣去復興古樂。如此對於已失的寶物，不能用心去搜尋，却徒事唏噓，有什麼利益呢？

*平心論之，我國古來所傳一切五聲音階的樂器，那裏及得來西洋樂器的優美呢；所談的樂理，又何嘗有西洋的和聲樂的精密呢。這種虛偽的誇大，並非尊重國體的意思，而是妨礙研究西樂者的一種妖言。)*³⁰

Conclusion

The writings above illustrate two poles of discourse on the cultural encounter among the Chinese – one admiring and the other rejecting western musical culture. The varied responses of the Chinese as the colonised towards the colonial culture are characteristics of semi-colonialism, as I suggested in my study of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra.³¹

Ju Qihong categorises thought in early twentieth-century China about western music into three different camps, namely revitalisation, abandonment or impoverishment, and syncretism.^[32] While the first two factions represent two poles of the dispute as seen from the article above, the last proposes an eclectic approach to the question. Revitalisation was a repercussion against the influence of western music. It loathed school songs, the adoption of the western music education system and other western influences on the development of Chinese music; and supporters asserted the revitalisation of ancient court music and traditional music. Abandonment or impoverishment, on the other hand, proposed an almost wholesale adoption of western music in place of Chinese traditional music. Proponents of this camp urged the learning of western music for the purpose of improving traditional Chinese music or creating new Chinese musical style. Syncretism, as suggested by Nettl, is a ‘fusion of elements from diverse cultural sources’ and the resulting ‘hybrid styles seem to have developed most readily when musical similarities between non-western and western cultures can be identified, when the musics are compatible and most important, when they share central traits.’^[33] The thought of Liang Qichao, an important figure in the New Culture Movement,^[34] is representative of this attitude. He pointed out that:

...reformation of [Chinese] music should rely on the import of Western music ... with a strategic and selective adoption of foreign compositions. As to the foundation [of the reformation], we should rely on our musical tradition, and abandon the biased view to expel other traditions.

(改造音樂必須輸進歐樂以為師資……對於外來品為有計劃的選擇容納。而所謂基礎者，不能不求諸在我，非挾有排外之成見也。)^[35]

Here, the diverse views of the Chinese reveal the tensions in the cultural encounter. As noted by Shi Shumei, this is also a feature of semi-colonialism, where ‘the Chinese intellectuals [possess] more varied ideological, political, and cultural positions than in formal colonies.’^[36]

From the various writings above, we can understand the reasons behind the absence of a Chinese audience in the early years of the orchestra, as well as the effort of the critics to promote western music in the Chinese community. These writers not only shared their concert-attending experience, they also expressed their own views and reported other Chinese people’s views on western music. The polarised opinions on colonial culture demonstrate one characteristic of semi-colonialism in Shanghai as suggested by Shi Shumei. These views were also translated into the varied responses of the Chinese musicians when they collaborated with the Municipal Orchestra in the next

decade, and to a greater extent led to the multi-directional development of Chinese music in the next century.

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📖 **LISTENING IN NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS**

COLONIALISM, COSMOPOLITANISM, MUSIC CRITICISM, SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL ORCHESTRA, WESTERN MUSIC IN CHINA