

WESTERN EUROPEAN ORCHESTRAL TRADITIONS IN CHINESE MUSICAL CULTURE: HISTORY AND MODERN ERA

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ABSTRACT: *The paper considers issues of the Chinese orchestral culture Europeanization, modern symphony, and orchestral art development. The historical stages are considered of establishing symphony orchestras in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The influence of England, France and the USA is shown on the Europeanization of the Shanghai musical and cultural space and establishing Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and Conservatory. The European and Chinese music transculturation is disclosed in the North China orchestral culture with a center in Harbin. The Russian and Chinese musicians' role is highlighted in establishing symphony orchestra (1908) at the Chinese Eastern Railway administration initiative. The influence is emphasized of the Soviet Union on the Chinese orchestral art Europeanization and assistance in training of professional conductors (Zheng Xiaoying, Li Delun). The "Cultural Revolution" negative consequences are analyzed for orchestral and symphonic performance and the tragic fate of individual musicians. The significance is underlined of the 80-90s economic reforms in the XX century for the Chinese music culture development, which gave impetus to the emergence of new orchestral groups and contributed to the expansion of creative contacts with the foreign performers. The modern directions are shown of the Guangzhou and Guiyang Symphony Orchestras creative development, which, given the balanced financial and economic policy and effective art management, became, over a short period of time, one of the best professional groups in China together with the Beijing and Shanghai Orchestras.*

Keywords – *orchestral culture, symphony orchestra, Cultural Revolution, conductor, soloist, orchestral musicians, concerto performances.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The China's orchestral art is one of the oldest phenomena in the history of global music culture. Its origins date back to 1550-1111 B.C. and associated with the traditional ritual ceremonies of the Shang dynasty. The orchestral performance reached its climax during the Zhou dynasty (1045-222 BC), following a significant enlargement in the instrumental composition, when a large number of percussion instruments was supplemented with the wind and string instruments. The Central Asian music, which gained widespread popularity during the Tang era (618-907), had an important impact on the evolutionary orchestra development. The court of the Tang dynasty emperors, within certain periods of the rule, numbered up to ten orchestras performing music of various genres, and some of their numerical composition included up to 1,400 performers. The Chinese orchestral culture was formed throughout its development period on the basis of multinational musical traditions and instruments of the nationalities that inhabited the country.

II. SHANGHAI AND HARBIN AS THE EUROPEAN ORCHESTRAL TRADITIONS INVOLVEMENT CENTERS

The territorial isolation of Chinese music from the Western European influence maintained until the mid-XIX century and was broken after the defeat of the Celestial Empire in the Opium Wars (1840-1860). This made the government to conclude a series of discriminatory agreements with the Western countries, under which a number of Chinese port cities became open to foreign trade. In reality, according to the contemporary Chinese researchers, it was the occupation of China by a coalition of the Western countries – Britain, France and the

United States, which obtained the right to create their own concession quarters with own administrative authorities and utilities management system. This concession division method was implemented in Shanghai, which due to its geographical and strategic location in the second half of the XIX century became not only an important trade and economic hub, but also a link between the West and the East in terms of musical and cultural communication. The attempts on the part of foreign administrations to ensure comfortable living conditions for their citizens in separate neighborhoods and provide the necessary European-style musical atmosphere for cultural leisure have become one of the main factors in the formation of appropriate music and performance infrastructure. These reasons explain the establishment of the Shanghai Band in 1879, and later, the establishment on its basis of China's first European-style performing group – the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. The British historian R. Bickers, when describing the environment prevailing in the English sector of Shanghai, said, “[i]t was a city in China, but with an orchestra playing soft music in an English-style garden on summer evenings” [1, 39].

However, the South was not the only place the European and Chinese music transculturation was associated with; a similar musical and cultural integration was observed in the artistic space of the North of China, with a center in Harbin. The establishment in 1908 of the Symphony Orchestra by the Chinese Eastern Railway administration (CER) paved the way for the penetration of the European orchestral culture traditions from the Russian Empire. As in Shanghai, foreigners – the Russian musicians from the Amur Railway Second Battalion — represented the ensemble but the Chinese conductors – Jun Jeli and Ba Thae – were the first leaders.

Although the establishment of symphony orchestras in the South and the North ensured a significant revival to the concerto life of these cities, in the short term, it could not accelerate significantly the transculturation process of orchestral culture of the West and the East. Considering the pathway of combining traditional Chinese music and the Western classical music and bringing something new to the traditional culture of the Celestial Empire, the famous Chinese educator and composer Huang Tzu said, “We have to learn all the good things of the European music, study and research our old folk music, and then, it will be easy to create “new music” with national features” [2, 64]. This statement by the founder of professional music education was addressed primarily to the Chinese composers. Instrumentalists, who from ancient times focused on traditional Chinese instruments, also had to go through a difficult path of mastering European orchestral academicism. Therefore, the criticism is not quite justified of modern Chinese researchers of the national symphony and orchestra performance history regarding the absence of Chinese musicians in the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, where “out of 60 or 70 people, all were the foreigners and only later, two Chinese musicians joined them..., which was irrelevant with regard to the Chinese symphonic music” [3, 269-270]. Given the absence of a developed system for professional academically focused music education, the presence of highly qualified orchestral performers on European musical instruments was virtually impossible.

The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, same as the Harbin Orchestra, became not only the performing groups that promoted the best examples of the Western European and Russian academic symphonic music, but were also important music and educational centers on the basis of which the music schools were later established. Only the establishment of the Shanghai Conservatory (1927) gave rise to the development of a national system for professional music education on the basis of the European academic tradition and training of the qualified orchestral musicians. It was after the Conservatory launch that the efforts to create new orchestras of Chinese performers intensified. The establishment of the Chinese Symphony Orchestra in Chongqing, which became the temporary capital during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), where most musicians from Shanghai and Nanjing moved, evidences this. Despite the long period of military conflict and the difficult economic situation in the newly created capital, the interest is growing in new orchestral music, which is increasingly focused on raising the patriotic spirit in combating the occupiers. In addition to the main symphony orchestra, two other groups – the Chongqing Radio Orchestra and the Yumuguan Conservatory also participated in certain opposition actions [3, 270].

Japan capitulation in World War II and formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) set up a new stage of the European music “cultural intervention” into the national orchestral space. The Soviet Union had a great impact on Chinese orchestral culture Europeanization, as it had some experience in the formation of musical art under the Western European classical principles in republics of the Central Asia. Training of the Chinese students at the Moscow and Leningrad Conservatories, including conductors – Zheng Xiaoying and Li Delun – was an important step towards the formation of national artistic staff. Li Delun, after return to his homeland, headed the Central Philharmonic Orchestra and the Western European and Russian symphonic music began to sound more and more often under his leadership.

III. ECONOMIC REFORMS AND A NEW DOCTRINE OF THE ORCHESTRAL CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

The economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping became an important factor that determined a new round of cultural construction and stimulated the successful development of Chinese orchestral culture in the 80-90s of the XX century. This had a positive effect on the emergence of new orchestral groups and the expansion of creative contacts with foreign performers. Under the reign of Jiang Zemin (1993-2003), the mainstreaming takes place of radical reorganization of the government's cultural policy with a focus on Western classical music. His great interest in music, in particular in piano and singing, which he mastered at the amateur level and repeatedly demonstrated to the Western leaders-partners [4, 333; 5, 307], contributed to a significant increase in public investment in the national music infrastructure. Examples include large-scale projects such as construction of the state-of-the-art Shanghai Grand Theater and the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, which were initiated by the Secretary-General and cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

CPC moderncultural doctrine, which main slogan is "meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of people striving for a better life", is focused not only on the grandiose construction of new concert halls and theaters, but also on the dynamic development of existing orchestras and establishment of new on-stage performance groups to become their direct owners and "producers of cultural products." Among the priority areas receiving the support from the government and local authorities, the preference is increasingly given to symphonic orchestral performance, which symbolizes the level of musical art development in a particular region and, as in ancient times, confirms its corresponding status¹.

IV. GUANGZHOU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: MODERN TRENDS IN CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1957, today is one of the leading creative groups in modern China. Due to its active concerto activities and successful collaboration with prominent musicians from around the world, it became widely known as the "Orchestra of Five Continents". Its modern management can be considered one of the most successful in terms of innovative approaches to professional, creative and economic development of the group.

One of the determining growth factors interms of orchestra's performance level and acknowledgement of its high professional status in the national Chinese and foreign orchestral culture is a balanced personnel policy based on strict principles of competitivenessselection of musicians. Given more than four million professional musicians in the country [7, 165-166] the selection of candidates has no restrictions on the involvement of foreign performers in competitions. That is why musicians from Europe and America represent the international creative group of the Guangzhou Orchestra together with the Chinese instrumentalists.

Another component of the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra successful development, as well as the orchestral culture of the region as a whole, is the purposeful training of employeeswithin the group. Since 2005, the artistic leadership of the orchestra has chosen the path to intensify work with young instrumentalists, students and pupils from local music schools. The launch of the Canton International Summer Music Academy in Canton, where master classes with young performers were held under the direction of the world-renowned musicians (M. Argerich, G. Graffman, Yo-Yo Ma) and the leaders of world-famous orchestras, was an important stage in the national orchestral school development. Regular summer academies facilitated the creation in 2011 of the Guangzhou Symphony Youth Orchestra and later (2012) – the Guangzhou Student Symphony Orchestra. Its main composition included 100 most talented young performers from local orchestras of secondary schools selected out of thousands of applicants. Weekly free classes of the orchestra are held under the patronage of musicians of the main group, who simultaneously provide the necessary management and technical training [8]. An additional part of the preparatory training system for orchestrators are the schools for younger age group (10-14 years), which serve as a personnel reserve. The focus of the educational process on training orchestral musicians directly in the environment of collective music increases the efficiency of mastering the necessary performing and orchestral skills and at the same time contributes to the development of a larger orchestral repertoire and gaining necessary practical experience.

No less effective means of improving the professional skills of musicians from the main and youth ensembles of the orchestra is their regular internships with leading experts in the European, American and South Asian groups, as evidenced by financial and creative reports. In recent years alone, more than twenty orchestra members have completed postgraduate education in the United States, Italy, Hong Kong and other countries [9, 12].

¹Interestingly, that already at the time of Zhou Dynasty in China, there were various orchestra compositions and placement of musicians there depended on the public status of their owners. The emperor owned the largest group of performers who were placedsquarewise, the orchestra owned by the high court ranks was located in two rows, and that of the lessnoble officials – in one row. [6, 17].

An important activity of the Guangzhou Main and Student Symphony Orchestra is cultural and educational work to promote symphonic music among the citizens. Flexible artistic and repertoire policy for compiling concerto programs, covering works of different eras and genres of foreign and Chinese composers, and a balanced approach to the formation of reasonable ticket prices, have become a determining factor in attracting a wide range of listeners to the concert halls. Subscription concertos and a separate series of free orchestra performances for schoolchildren and the public also contributed to audience building.

The total number of concertos of all structural units of the main and youth orchestras in 2017 was 148 performances, of which 25 were held by young members. Xinghai Hai Concert Hall serves as a stationary stage for most of the orchestra's concertos, which is a complex of three concerto venues: a large hall with 1,500 seats and a stage for 170 orchestra members and a choir of 200 people; chamber hall with 460 seats and a small hall for 96 listeners. Excellent acoustics and a high level of technical equipment of the premises allow providing ideal conditions for performers and comfort for listeners.

Over the past decades, the symphony orchestra has been actively collaborating with prominent soloists and conductors worldwide, which allowed the group reaching a level of the best European and American orchestras and holding a leading ranking position of highly professional bands.

V. GUIYANG SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: NEW PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Despite the rather generous funding of the leading public symphony orchestras, not all provinces have the necessary conditions and funds to create and maintain a full-fledged band. Then, the initiative is taken by business structures, which together with the local authorities are trying to find ways to address the existing issues. One example of such a socio-cultural project is the organization of the first private symphony orchestra in Guiyang (Guizhou province). Its establishment history is associated with the name of Huang Zhiming— a well-known regional business professional, owner of the Xingli Group department store chain, former violist of the local song and dance ensemble. Mr. Zhiming's successful entrepreneurial activity, his vast experience as an orchestral musician, as well as his desire to improve regional musical culture became a prerequisite for creation in 2009 of a highly professional music band. Huang Zhiming explains the idea of establishing a symphony orchestra quite simply, "I want less mahjong² sound and more music in this city" [10]. A balanced financial and economic policy and effective art management ensured in a short time the dynamic Guiyang Symphony Orchestra development and becoming, together with the Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou orchestras, one of the best professional bands in China.

In the absence of direct government funding, which provides almost all symphony orchestras with the main costs for musicians' salaries, rehearsal and concerto activities of the band, Xingli Group, as well as revenues from advertising and ticket sales, cover these orchestra budget items. The municipality provides the symphony orchestra with rehearsals and concertos venues, as well as the purchase of instruments. In recent years, the amount of annual funding from a private company has increased from ten to twenty million yuan, and the contribution of local authorities is three million. Compared to the Shanghai and Guangzhou Symphony Orchestras, Guiyang has a meager budget, but this did not prevent the formation of its troupe and inviting talented young performers. This is facilitated by the regular open competitions for a place in the orchestra among Chinese and foreign instrumentalists.

The main selection criterion for musicians is their skill and high creative potential. Since 2010, the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra has been composed of the representatives from various performing schools, including young orchestra members from Great Britain, France, Italy, Singapore, Colombia, Belarus, Ukraine, etc. (a total of 19 countries). The average age of orchestra members is less than thirty years. Although the Guiyang Young Symphony Orchestra still has a long way to go to achieve creative excellence to compete successfully with mature orchestras, as the authoritative Chinese conductor Chen Zuohuang said on tour with the Hong Kong band, "this orchestra is very passionate and energetic," and has powerful potential to reach the heights in performing skills [11].

The high salary level of orchestra members³ and comfortable living conditions guaranteed by the orchestra's management have become one of the main reasons for the increased interest of talented young people in the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra and the desire to join it. However, by offering high, in terms of local standards, financial conditions for musicians, artistic management requires appropriate creative activity from the performers. Throughout concerto season, which lasts from September to the end of June, the orchestra should prepare 35 to 39 programs, presenting new works before townspeople every Saturday in the concert hall of the Guiyang Grand Theater. The high-quality rehearsal work of the orchestra's musicians is ensured by twenty-five hours a week with a daily five-hour schedule. To ensure current control over technical and artistic level of

² Mahjong – Chinese table crap shooting, widespread in the East and Southeast Asia.

³The average salary of band soloists is CNY 25,000-30,000 per month (about USD 3,750-4,500).

orchestra members' skills, the art management introduced a kind of "qualification exam", which is held twice a year and serves as an additional incentive to maintain proper performance. Such a strict principle of forming a competitive environment for musicians is certainly an important factor in the growth of orchestral performance culture and own style creation. Critics and colleagues from other band are often pleasantly surprised while evaluating the creative achievements of the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra. It is difficult for them to understand how young musicians managed to achieve not only a high culture of performance in a short time, but also to form a personal orchestral style.

In addition to home concertos according to a clear schedule, the Guyana Symphony Orchestra also tours regularly in neighboring countries of the East and Southeast Asia, as well as in Europe and the United States.

The orchestra's repertoire portfolio is extremely diverse and includes the best samples of Western music and Chinese composers. The latter are increasingly included in programs during tours to the Old and New Worlds, which provides an opportunity to introduce to the Western listeners the creative pieces of contemporary Chinese composers.

The highlight of orchestra's programme during various seasons included the prominent Chinese conductors and performers – Chen Zuohuang, Li Xincao, Zhang Guoyong, Italian Rico Saccani and others, who opened the way for the band to the top of national orchestral Olympus. Today, the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra is considered not only a brand identity and jewel of the city, but according to its founder Huang Zhiming, is trying to become a national music and cultural brand and actively promote the best of Chinese music at the international level.

VI. CONCLUSION

Today, the orchestral and symphonic art of China is at its height. Successful economic reforms under political slogans of the "new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics and spirit" became a powerful impetus for creation of a developed orchestral and performing infrastructure not only in such large cultural cities as Beijing and Shanghai, but also in smaller regional centers. An important role in the national orchestral culture development belongs to the National Association of Symphony Orchestras, which in recent years has been active in music education and provides professional and advisory assistance to peripheral orchestras on organizational and creative matters to promote symphonic music in the country.

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