

Alexander Tcherepnin's Musical Footprint in Twentieth-Century China

By

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ABSTRACT

In April 1934, Soviet modernist composer and pianist Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977) visited China during a world tour meant to stretch from Japan to Palestine. After falling in love with Chinese music, Tcherepnin cancelled the rest of his tour outside of the East Asia and returned to China, spending two years as a teacher, composer, publisher, and concertizer. This thesis examines Tcherepnin's impact of Chinese musical identity and education. Chapter One provides a review of the literature used in this thesis. Chapter Two describes the historical and political environment in China at the time of Tcherepnin's visits, including an examination of the Shanghai Conservatory. Chapter Three establishes Tcherepnin's musical upbringing and philosophy, including his interest in national and folk music and his international musical perspective. Chapter Four discusses his efforts in China, including his composition competition, publishing company, and relationships with Chinese educators and composers. Chapter Five discusses limitations on Tcherepnin's impact and the various factors that mitigated it following his departure. I conclude that Tcherepnin's influence was affected by a complex collection of political and social factors of the twentieth century, not the least of which was the disconnect between Tcherepnin's Chinese music and that of his students and peers.

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Preface: Tcherepnin and China

On April 10, 1934,¹ renowned composer and concert pianist Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977) took a steamship to China to begin a tour meant to stretch from China to Palestine to Europe.² He planned to use his travels to investigate folk music from around the world in the hopes of finding new sources of musical inspiration. Within a few months of arriving in China, however, he cancelled the entirety of his tour outside of his stops in China and Japan. He would go on to spend two years in China and Japan, immersing himself in their music and culture. He fell deeply in love with Chinese music and culture, learning to play the pipa, the Chinese pear-shaped lute, performing contemporary Chinese compositions in his concerts, and incorporating Chinese themes and musical elements into his works throughout the rest of his career. He also actively involved himself in Chinese music education, teaching free lessons to composition students, organizing the first piano composition competition in China, and composing piano etudes and music based around the Chinese anhemitonic pentatonic scale. His international reputation and Chinese musical efforts made Tcherepnin a major figure in early twentieth-century Chinese musical developments.

Tcherepnin's time in China earned him a reputation as a key figure in contemporary Chinese musical developments. In 1935, less than a year after Tcherepnin's arrival, Shanghai Conservatory president Xiao Youmei (1884-1940) made him an honorary professor at the conservatory,³ where he taught figures like future president of the Shanghai Conservatory He Luting (1903-1999). In early 1937, Xiao recommended Tcherepnin as a musical advisor to the Chinese Ministry of Education, a position that involved aiding the government in shaping their

¹ Hon-lun Helan Yang, Simo Mikkonen, and John Winzenburg, *Networking the Russian Diaspora: Russian Musicians and Musical Activities in Interwar Shanghai*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), 127-128, 153.

² Alexander Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Episodes," 122.

³ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 156.

national policy on music education.⁴ Tcherepnin accepted the position,⁵ but his departure in the same year prevented him from offering any real influence in it. Nevertheless, he remains the first European or Russian member of the advisory group,⁶ and his legacy in China is not diminished for his lack of impact in that role.

Musicians, scholars, and the Chinese government have promoted Tcherepnin's legacy in China since his first visit in 1934. During Tcherepnin's time in China, newspapers and journals published articles and concert reviews with comments describing his "enthusiasm" for and aid in "the development of Chinese musical culture."⁷ Contemporaries or students like He Luting later claimed Tcherepnin was "the only Western composer who so passionately loved Chinese music."⁸ After he left, the Republic of China asked him to "harmonize and orchestrate the [Chinese] national anthem," a request which he obliged.⁹ Even though he had aided the Republic, the Chinese Communist Party still praised Tcherepnin after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and in more recent decades.¹⁰ Institutions like the Shanghai Conservatory have offered concert tributes and conferences in his honor. According to Hon-lun Helan Yang, Simon Mikkonen, and John Winzenburg in their book *Networking the Russian Diaspora*, "Tcherepnin [has] regularly been regarded as the foremost foreign influence on Chinese musicians," with an array of modern articles demonstrating the respect he still holds among Chinese "conservatory-trained musicians."¹¹ Despite the honor in which the composer is

⁴ Chi-Jen Chang, "Alexander Tcherepnin, His Influence on Modern Chinese Music," (PhD diss., Columbia University, New York, 1983), 94, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/alexander-tcherepnin-his-influence-on-modern/docview/303139558/se-2?accountid=4886>.

⁵ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 22.

⁶ Chang, "His Influence," 94

⁷ Cen Ziren, "After Hearing Tcherepnin's Performance," *Music Education* vol. 4, Jiangxi: China (1937), translated by Chang in "His Influence," 126.

⁸ He Luting quoted in Folkman, *Compendium*, 139.

⁹ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 129.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 201.

held, however, Tcherpnin's chief philosophy concerning Chinese music has not been adopted in China.

Tcherpnin believed that Chinese folk music had inherent value. All of his musical efforts in China stemmed out of that belief, from his etudes meant to allow Chinese composers to remain rooted in their musical traditions to his competition meant to promote compositions written with traditional Chinese musical elements. Chinese musicians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, have sought to alter China's traditional music to fit with European classical musical traditions. Even Tcherpnin's students turned to romanticism and European musical languages in their compositions instead of focusing on the unique elements of Chinese music Tcherpnin sought to honor. How is it that a composer held in such high esteem has had his core philosophy rejected so thoroughly? Why did such an honored and respected figure have so little impact on contemporary Chinese music as a whole? I propose two reasons for this neglect. First, Chinese musicians and music culture never really understood Tcherpnin's philosophy in the first place. Second, the cultural and political climate before, during, and after Tcherpnin's visit made these ideas countercultural at best and dangerous at worst.

Chapter One: Literature

Overview

In general, writings on Alexander Tcherepnin fall into two main categories: theoretical analyses of his works and biographical descriptions mixed with theoretical analyses. While some works do focus more on the biographical elements, such as Willi Reich's *Alexander Tcherepnin*, few provide in-depth discussions of his time in China. Tcherepnin himself discusses the topic, as do Hon-lun Helan Yang, Simo Mikkonen, and John Winzenburg in their 2020 book *Networking the Russian Diaspora: Russian Musicians and Musical Activities in Interwar Shanghai* and Chi-Jen Chang's 1983 "Alexander Tcherepnin, His Influence on Modern Chinese Music." A survey of other literature on modern Chinese musical developments proved necessary to understanding Tcherepnin's impact, including discussions on the Cultural Revolution.

Tcherepnin's Writings

Tcherepnin wrote numerous pieces on Chinese music and his own life. The most important of these for this study include "Music in Modern China" published in *The Musical Quarterly* in 1935, and "Alexander Tcherepnin: a short Autobiography (1964)," published in *Tempo* in September 1979. In the first, Tcherepnin describes China, its political and musical developments, and its significant musicians, adding at the end a copy of *Buffalo Boy's Flute* by Tcherepnin's student He Luting.¹ In the second, he provides a broad overview of his life and musical development, including the evolution of his musical philosophy. Also significant is Tcherepnin's "Basic Elements of My Musical Language," written in January 1962. Available both on the Tcherepnin Society's website and in the society's president Benjamin Folkman's *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Compendium*, this article provides an description of his compositional

¹ Alexander Tcherepnin, "Music in Modern China," *The Musical Quarterly*, 21, no. 4 (Oct 1935), 400, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/738658>.

tools. Enrique Alberto Arias's "Alexander Tcherepnin's Thoughts on Music," published in *Perspectives of New Music* in 1982, offers additional useful information from Tcherepnin himself. The article consists of twenty-four statements by Tcherepnin on music, his own and in general, and philosophy, with an introduction and annotations by Arias. In *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography* (1989), described below, Arias also included an edited excerpt from a 1967 letter from Tcherepnin to composer and author Nicolas Slonimsky (1894-1995), in which Tcherepnin describes his life and musical development.²

European and North American Scholarship

European and North American scholarship on Tcherepnin includes several books, dissertations, and articles. One of the most important books³ is Willi Reich's *Alexander Tcherepnin* (1970, second edition, translated into English in Benjamin Folkman's *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Compendium*, 2021), long considered the definitive biography of Tcherepnin. The second edition covers Tcherepnin's life from birth until 1968, with the English translation in Folkman's compendium including an additional chapter by Folkman on Tcherepnin's final years. Similarly, Ludmilla Korabelnikova's *Alexander Tcherepnin: The Saga of a Russian Émigré Composer* (2008), examines the life and music of Tcherepnin and includes translations of smaller writings on and by Tcherepnin. Arias's *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography* (1989) contains a brief biography of Tcherepnin, a stylistic analysis of his works, and annotated catalogues of Tcherepnin's music and writings on Tcherepnin. Hon-lun Helan Yang, Simo Mikkonen, and John Winzenburg's *Networking the Russian Diaspora* devotes an entire chapter

² Tcherepnin, letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, 1967, quoted in Enrique Alberto Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1989), 207-211.

³ Folkman, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Compendium*, vii; Arias, "Alexander Tcherepnin's Thoughts on Music," 144n1.

to Tcherepnin's efforts in China (Chapter Six: "From 'Folk Cure' to Catharsis: Alexander Tcherepnin and New Chinese Music") and references him throughout the rest of the book.

One of the most useful sources was Folkman's *Compendium*, mentioned above as a source for Tcherepnin's "Basic Elements" and the source for the English translation of Reich's biography. Copyrighted in 2008 and published in 2021, the compendium includes a wide range of biographical materials, analyses of Tcherepnin's works, and a collection of writings on or by Tcherepnin. Of particular importance is the *Compendium*'s "Five Biographical Episodes" by Lily Chou and Folkman, which provides information on Tcherepnin's marriage to Louisine Weekes (1886-1952) and courtship of Lee Hsien Ming (1915-1991) glossed over or avoided in most other sources.⁴ Also important are Folkman's annotations of the English translation of Reich's text, which correct several factual inaccuracies.

Two dissertations featured significantly in my research on Tcherepnin. In his "The Complete Piano Music of Alexander Tcherepnin: an Essay Together with a Comprehensive Project in Piano Performance" (1974), former student of Tcherepnin Guy S. Wuellner both catalogues Tcherepnin's piano works and provides a substantial biographical account. Chi-Jen Chang, meanwhile, uses his "Alexander Tcherepnin, His Influence on Modern Chinese Music" (1983) to offer political and social context before and after Tcherepnin's visit, including describing the eventual fates of Tcherepnin's students. Other dissertations on Tcherepnin, while providing biographical information, focus on the impact of Chinese music on Tcherepnin's compositions. While these underline Tcherepnin's love for China, they offer little in terms of Tcherepnin's philosophical legacy in China.

⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg describe this lack of information in their own description of Tcherepnin's marriages, which pulls from Folkman's compendium; Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 167-171.

Chinese Scholarship

Chinese scholarship on Tcherepnin in recent years has seen an increase in Chinese writings on Tcherepnin. According to Chang, the early years of the Cultural Revolution banished discussions of Tcherepnin from China, at least in part due to Tcherepnin's Russian identity. In 1979, following the revolution's end, Chang's own article "A. Tcherepnin and Chinese Music" appeared in publication on mainland China, sparking interest among other scholars. The overall increase in Chinese scholarly activity following the suppression of such work during the revolution has further contributed to the resurgence of writing on Tcherepnin, with scholarly articles and papers like Chang's supplementing concert reviews and newspaper articles from Tcherepnin's earlier visits. Musical performances followed, with a memorial concert for Tcherepnin on October 12, 1982 at the Central Conservatory of Music⁵ and similar events in "Senyan, Xian, Cendu, and Guangdong" conservatories.⁶ More recently, *齐尔品与中国音乐文化国际研讨会论文集 (Essays for the international forum of Tcherepnin and Chinese music culture)* has provided Chinese and foreign scholarship on Tcherepnin from the Shanghai Conservatory's forum of the same name held in 2012. Hong-Yu Gong's article *齐尔品研究在海外——兼及内有关研究* ("Alexander Tcherepnin and His World – A Bibliographical Perspective") (2019) also offers a broad survey of foreign scholarship on Tcherepnin. Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg note that "[n]umerous articles" frequently struggle with "repeating erroneous information," raising a need for caution when approaching these materials.⁷

⁵ Chang, "His Influence," 143-147.

⁶ Ibid., 148.

⁷ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 202.

Literature on Tcherepnin's Impact

The majority of sources on Tcherepnin do not consider his philosophical legacy in China. While Korabelnikova, Arias, and Folkman have all provided significant materials on Tcherepnin's life and music, they and other researchers focus on Tcherepnin's experiences in China as they relate to Tcherepnin and his music. Two works do consider the subject in depth: Chang's 1983 dissertation and Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg's 2020 *Networking the Russian Diaspora*. Chang's dissertation, however, approaches Tcherepnin's impact with the assumption that "China is to develop a creative tradition in the Western idiom,"⁸ an idea contrary to Tcherepnin's actual beliefs. While Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg do not fall into this bias, they do not distinguish between Tcherepnin's philosophical influence and his compositional influence. Tcherepnin did have an impact in China—his composition competition, for example, allowed He Luting to study at the Shanghai Conservatory he would eventually lead and his instruction of Jiang Wenye led the latter from Japan to China. However, that Tcherepnin's belief in the inherent value of Chinese music was not perpetuated along with his musical ideas fails to come across in their work. Only one source discusses Tcherepnin's opposition to Westernization: Yang's "The Shanghai Conservatory, Chinese Musical Life, and The Russian Diaspora, 1927–1949: Dedicated to Neil Edmunds" (2017), which examines the relationship between Russian pedagogues and their Chinese students. Yang, however, limits her discussion to a paragraph and only concludes that Tcherepnin's influence played a "less crucial" role in Chinese development than that of the Russian peers who outnumbered him.⁹ She does not address the many other

⁸ Chang, "His Influence," 155.

⁹ Hon-Lun Yang, "The Shanghai Conservatory, Chinese Musical Life, and The Russian Diaspora, 1927-1949: Dedicated to Neil Edmunds," *Twentieth-Century China* 37, no. 1 (May 11, 2017): 93, doi:10.1353/tcc.2012.0010.

reasons that Tcherepnin's students did not embrace his philosophy. My research focused on this failed influence of Tcherepnin and the cultural and political factors that caused it.

Literature on Contemporary Chinese Music

Scholarship on contemporary Chinese musical developments has formed a significant field in modern scholarly research. For this paper, the author mainly focused on sources on modernization between the 1920s and 1980s. Three key books were Richard Curt Kraus's *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle Over Western Music* (1989), Barbara Mittler's *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China Since 1949* (1997), and Barbara Mittler's *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (2012). *Pianos and Politics* examines the international context, Westernization, and "middle-class intellectual[s]"¹⁰ of Chinese music before, during, and after the Cultural Revolution. *Dangerous Tunes* describes the evolution of and influences on New Music in China, defining New Music as Chinese music that "emerged under Western influence [and] uses Western instrumental and compositional techniques which are new to China."¹¹ *A Continuous Revolution* investigates the impact of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese art and culture, including music. Among works by Chinese scholars, Yuhe Wang's *Zhongguo Xiandai Yin Yue Shigang: 1949~2000. 中国现代音乐史纲: 1949~2000 (A Brief History of Chinese Modern Music: 1949-2000)* (2009), which offers a synopsis of modern Chinese music from 1949 to 2000, proved the most useful.

Many dissertations and articles examine contemporary Chinese musical developments. Among the dissertations, Dr. Mei Han's "The Emergence of the Chinese Zheng: Traditional

¹⁰ Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle Over Western Music*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: x, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=143705&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

¹¹ Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes*, 8.

Context, Contemporary Evolution, and Cultural Identity” (2013) discusses modern Chinese musical developments through the lens of the zheng, a 21-string Chinese long zither. Joys Hoi Yan Cheung’s “Chinese Music and Translated Modernity in Shanghai, 1918-1937” (2008) examines life and music in early twentieth-century Shanghai. Brace’s “Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and the Politics of Style” (1992) contextualizes modern Chinese musical and political developments.

Several articles proved key to the writing of this thesis. Hon-Lun Helan Yang’s “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism: The Performativity of Western Music Endeavours in Interwar Shanghai” (2021) discusses the cultural factors in and development of Shanghai before and during Tcherepnin’s visit. Antoinet Schimmelpenninck and Frank Kouwenhoven’s “The Shanghai Conservatory of Music: History and Foreign Students’ Experiences” (1993) provides an overview of the conservatory’s development, including its social and political environment. Eugénie Grenier Borel’s “The Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Its Rhetoric: Building a World Class Musical Institution with Chinese Characteristics” (2019) discusses globalization in recent years at the Shanghai Conservatory. Gerlinde Gild’s “Early 20th Century ‘Reforms’ in Chinese Music: Dreams of Renewal Inspired by Japan and the West” (1998) examines the history and methods of modernization in twentieth-century Chinese music. Mei Han’s “The *Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto: Cultural Interaction Between China and the West in the Twentieth Century” (1998) provided a translation of a quote by Mao Zedong on his approach to musical modernization.

Specific Reference Literature

Several pieces of reference literature proved useful in the writing of this thesis. The most helpful came in the form of *Grove Music Online*, which provided and verified information on a

range of topics. Aria's section "Tcherepnin, Alexander (Nikolayevich)" in the article "Tcherepnin family" provided an overview of Tcherepnin and description of his musical styles. Alan R. Thrasher's section "Introduction: historical, regional and study perspectives" in "China, People's Republic of" offered information on traditional Chinese views on music. Jonathan P.J. Stock's section in the same article provided insight into the Cultural Revolution. Stock also wrote the additional articles "Shanghai," which covers the city's cultural, political, and musical climate, and "Jiang Wenye," which describes the composer's life and legacy. Frank Kouwenhoven contributed "He Luting," which summarizes the composer's musical life and persecution. Finally, the author uses Merriam-Webster's entry on "Tartar" to clarify Tcherepnin's use of the word in describing his musical influences in "Basic Elements of My Musical Language."

Chapter Two: Contemporary Chinese Music Before 1934

Historical and Political Context

China's contemporary musical philosophy prior to Tcherepnin's arrival in China in 1934 developed out of the damage dealt to the Chinese national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prior to 1839 and the start of the first Opium War, China considered itself "the centre of the world,"¹ superior to all other nations. The Opium Wars and many ensuing humiliations at the hands of other countries, including the loss of cities, land, and money to the wartime victors,² left the Chinese questioning their identity. Prominent academic leaders, such as reformer Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and translator Yan Fu (1852-1909),³ blamed China's defeats on traditional Chinese culture. For China to claim a position among the powerful countries of the world, they argued, it must discard traditional Chinese education, learn from Western "science and technology," and institute political reforms in line with "Western constitutional models."⁴ This idea of using Westernization to achieve modernization gained traction during the early twentieth century with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the establishment of the Republic of China in the same year, and the May Fourth movement of 1919. The May Fourth movement, a protest by students and scholars infuriated by their country's inability to gain independence from other nations,⁵ demonstrated the height of "anti-traditional and pro-Western sentiments"⁶ and paved the way for future Westernized developments in Chinese music.

¹ Mei Han, "The Emergence of the Chinese Zheng: Traditional Context, Contemporary Evolution, and Cultural Identity," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia), 2013: 103.

² Others include the second Opium War (1856-1860), the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901).

³ Ibid., 103n95.

⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁵ Mitter, "The Era of Modernization in China Part Two"; the protest was provoked by the news that China, which had sent about 140,000 workers to aid the Allies during World War II, would not receive German territorial possessions in Shandong—the Treaty of Versailles gave these lands to Japan instead.

⁶ Han, "Emergence of the Chinese Zheng," 104.

The twentieth-century rejection of traditional Chinese music perhaps developed in part out of traditional views of Chinese music. China considered music a representation of “a nation’s spirit,”⁷ going so far as to establish a new root pitch,⁸ called “yellow bell”⁹ or “huangzhong,” for each empire. This pitch, which formed the basis for the tuning of Chinese music, represented the relationship between the ruling dynasty and its people¹⁰ and the dynasty’s “legitimacy.”¹¹ Emperors used music as a whole as “the model of their government” and a model to their people, believing that “good” music would produce upright citizens.¹² “[L]icentious music,” on the other hand, would irreparably damage the country by “ruin[ing] the morals” of its citizens.¹³ Since China had lost its power and authority in its battle with the rest of the world, Chinese scholars believed that the music of China must be “underdeveloped”¹⁴ and out of harmony. For China to grow in harmony and take its position as a “strong and independent” nation, then, it required a “new music [to] ... represent the new nation.”¹⁵ Since Europe had beaten them, Europe’s music must be the route to this new music.

The development of Chinese music in the twentieth century also arose from the overall principles of Westernization. Possibly due to Europe’s accomplishments in economic and military realms, a significant number of musicians and scholars in China “assumed that Western

⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁸ Fred Fisher, “The Yellow Bell of China and the Endless Search,” *Music Educators Journal* 59, no. 8 (1973): 32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3394271>.

⁹ Thrasher et al., “China, People’s Republic of,” 8.

¹⁰ Fred Fisher, “The Yellow Bell of China and the Endless Search,” *Music Educators Journal* 59, no. 8 (1973): 32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3394271>.

¹¹ Lulu Chiu, “From 1746 to 1786: the Continued Revision of the Imperial Music Treatise Yuzhi Lülü Zhengyi Houbian,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56, no. 3 (July 2009): 273, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/1746-1786-continued-revision-imperial-music/docview/214584326/se-2?accountid=4886>.

¹² Mei-pa Chao, *The Yellow Bell: a Brief Sketch of the History of Chinese Music* (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), 41.

¹³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 105.

¹⁵ Ibid.

music ... was probably based on ‘advanced’ and ‘scientifically objective principles.’ Using this so-called “scientificness” as support, these intellectuals viewed “Western music [as] ... ‘superior’ to China’s own,”¹⁶ reflecting more general views on European superiority to China. Since they also believed that music developed along “an evolutionary path and could be ‘improved’ over time,” many intellectuals promoted the use of these superior European and “musical techniques” and, on occasion, instruments.¹⁷ While they agreed on the foundation for such development, however, scholars differed on how best to employ these tools.

Scholars fell into three main camps on how to use European music in reforming Chinese music. Some, such as educator Fei Shi (1884-1959), argued for the replacement of Chinese music with European music.¹⁸ Others, such as musicologist Wang Guangqi (1891-1936), proposed using ancient music and folk tunes “to discover Chinese music’s essence”¹⁹ and then developing a new musical style from that essence.²⁰ Finally, some, led by musicologist and eventual founder of the Shanghai Conservatory Xiao Youmei, argued for using “Western models,” including “harmony and scales,” “technology,” and “staff notation,” to “‘improve’ Chinese music.”²¹ This third method reflected the broader scheme of Westernization by using European ideals to improve already existing Chinese music. Thus, “especially apt” for China’s cultural and social environment, this last strategy went on to serve as “the doctrine for Chinese music reform” and provide the foundation for Chinese musical developments of the early twentieth century.²²

¹⁶ Gerlinde Gild, “Early 20th Century ‘Reforms’ in Chinese Music: Dreams of Renewal Inspired by Japan and the West,” *CHIME*, nos. 12-13 (1998): 116.

¹⁷ Gild, “Early 20th Century,” 116.

¹⁸ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 106n101.

¹⁹ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 106.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

²¹ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 107.

²² *Ibid.*

The integration of European influences into Chinese music affected most aspects of Chinese music making in the early twentieth century. Instrument makers began to modify their products to suit European tuning systems and performance practices, adding more frets to instruments and switching out silk strings for steel ones. Composers started composing with European harmonies or instruments, moving from traditional pentatonic scales and heterophonic textures to the seven-note diatonic scale and homophonic or polyphonic textures. Performers began to take up European instruments like the piano or violin, earning acclaim and participating in competitions around the world. Pedagogically, public schools began requiring “school song” classes, which used European, North American, or Japanese tunes with new lyrics “to invoke a national or patriotic spirit.”²³ In 1927, the push for Westernization expanded into the highest levels of Chinese musical training with the founding of the first Chinese music conservatory: the Shanghai Conservatory.

Shanghai and the Conservatory

Shanghai’s social and political environment provided the backdrop for the foundation of the Shanghai Conservatory, also known as the National Conservatory. At the close of the First Opium War, the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing permitted “foreign trade and settlement” in “five treaty ports,” including Shanghai.²⁴ Divided into “three jurisdictions,”²⁵ Shanghai fell under the control of the International Settlement, the French Settlement, and the Chinese Settlement, each with “its own government, police force and legislation.”²⁶ The International Settlement and French Settlement hosted “foreign subjects,” who received “extraterritorial rights”²⁷ and the authority to

²³ Ibid., 105n1.

²⁴ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 366; the others were Canton, Xiamen (also known as Amoy), Fuzhou, and Ningbo.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Stock, “Shanghai,” 1.

²⁷ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 366.

restrict the actions of the Chinese living within them.²⁸ “Western music” initially served as a demonstration of not only “Western ... cultural identity” and “lifestyle” but the “sovereign power that explicitly distinguished [these] Western settlers from Chinese residents.”²⁹ Following the New Culture Movement of 1919, however, Chinese musicians could join “in musical activities ... [in] the Western community,”³⁰ not just their own. By 1929,³¹ upper-class Chinese sought to “embrace Western music” in its role as “a cultural asset and a form of cultural capital.”³² By engaging with this music, they could both demonstrate their “taste and social class” and enjoy “the prestige associated with Shanghai’s international community” via the music’s relationship to Chinese modernity.³³ Young musicians, drawn to the opportunities provided by learning European and North American music and instruments, also took up such music. Out of this environment full of interest in European and North American music developed the Shanghai Conservatory.

The National Conservatory developed out of the Westernization of Chinese music. Conservatory founders Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) and Xiao Youmei viewed Westernization as “a necessary means to liberate [China] from outdated customs and traditions.”³⁴ They and the Republic of China, which sponsored the conservatory, hoped it would both “introduce music of the world [to China] and ... systematize Chinese music ... to reach *datong* (meaning a single form of music),” which would help “nourish [Chinese] people’s sense of beauty, harmony, and [their love] of arts.”³⁵ To this end, the students of the school would undergo “systematic and

²⁸ Ibid., 368-369; parks were off-limits to all Chinese but those caring for foreigners’ children. Entrance to the town hall was forbidden to all Chinese.

²⁹ Ibid., 366.

³⁰ Ibid., 369.

³¹ Ibid., 371.

³² Ibid., 372.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 127.

³⁵ “Guoli yinyue yuan zhaoshang” translated and quoted in Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128.

professional Western music training,” allowing them “to compete with their Western counterparts on equal grounds” and thus stand “on par with Western powers in the cultural arena.”³⁶ Despite this seemingly-European focus, however, the founders did not exclude Chinese musical training from the conservatory. Doing so, after all, would hardly have helped reform Chinese music, the chief goal of the driving force behind the conservatory: Xiao Youmei.

Xiao Youmei’s musical experiences and training proved essential to the founding and musical focus of the Shanghai Conservatory. One of the premiere twentieth-century Chinese musicologists,³⁷ Xiao developed an interest in European and North American music in his childhood, when he discovered organ music at “the neighborhood Catholic school by his home in Macau.”³⁸ He went abroad in 1901 to pursue his musical studies, spending his high school and college years from 1901 to 1909 studying piano, voice, and pedagogy in Japan.³⁹ After returning to China for three years, Xiao travelled to Germany in 1912 to continue his education.⁴⁰ He “studied music theory and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory and then studied conducting at the Sternsche Konzervatorium in Berlin.”⁴¹ He earned his doctorate from the Leipzig Conservatory⁴² in 1916⁴³ and returned to China in roughly four years later.⁴⁴ His interest in and exposure to European music shaped his views on Westernization and Chinese music.

Xiao Youmei’s musical philosophy contributed significantly to the founding and focus of the Shanghai Conservatory. Following his arrival back, Xiao struggled with the state of Chinese

³⁶ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 370.

³⁷ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 107.

³⁸ Joys Hoi Yan Cheung, “Chinese Music and Translated Modernity in Shanghai, 1918-1937,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 183.

³⁹ Cheung, “Chinese Music,” 183.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 127.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Exact dates vary. Mittler and Cheung put his return in 1920, while Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg claim that he travelled back in 1919; Cheung, “Chinese Music,” 184; Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes*, 25n92; Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, 127.

music. Holding up functional harmony, equal temperament, keyboard instruments, and staff notation as examples,⁴⁵ Xiao argued that the music of China had fallen behind that of Europe and North America technologically and musically centuries prior.⁴⁶ For Chinese culture to progress, he believed, Chinese music needed to adopt the “Western models” that had passed China by, including harmony, scales, musical technology, and staff notation.⁴⁷ China, therefore, needed “a formal educational institution to reform Chinese music.”⁴⁸ To this end, Xiao worked with Cai Yuanpei, a personal friend and the Republic of China’s Minister of Education, to found the Shanghai Conservatory in 1927.⁴⁹

Xiao’s interest in European music led to the establishment of the National Conservatory in Shanghai. At the time, China as a country possessed neither an orchestra nor a government willing to fund one. This lack disappointed Xiao, who viewed even individual cities having their own symphony orchestras as “synonymous with civility and modernity” in terms of a nation’s standing,⁵⁰ a reflection of his Westernized training. He did attempt to organize such an ensemble himself, but his efforts failed. The existence of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra (SMO), funded by the municipality itself, came as a surprise to Xiao.⁵¹ The three concerts by the SMO he attended in October 1927 left him “[v]ery impressed.”⁵² The symphony, in conjunction with the city’s other “opportunities to appreciate music,” convinced Xiao to propose Shanghai as the site

⁴⁵ Cheung, “Chinese Music,” 243.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 240; he went so far as to claim that China had not developed musically for “the past thousand years”; Ibid., 243.

⁴⁷ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 107.

⁴⁸ Cheung, “Chinese Music,” 184.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Cai Yuanpei served as president of the conservatory for two months, after which time he passed the position on to Xiao Youmei.

⁵⁰ Hon-Lun Yang and Michael Saffle, *China and the West: Music, Representation, and Reception* (1st ed., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017.), 54, doi:10.1353/book.50522.

⁵¹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128-129.

⁵² Ibid., 129.

for the National Conservatory.⁵³ Xiao succeeded in this endeavor, providing “an environment for students to attend as well as give performances.”⁵⁴ Perhaps more importantly, however, he and his students gained “access to the city’s many residing Russian musicians, many of whom were well trained and even world-class performers.”⁵⁵ These Russian musicians would prove crucial in the development of the conservatory.

Russian musicians played an important role in the development of twentieth-century Chinese music. Many Russian émigrés moved to China in the 1920s and 1930s to escape the political turmoil in Russia, with Shanghai’s “Russian-speaking community ... estimated ... thirty thousand” in number by the mid-1930s.⁵⁶ Mostly upper- or middle-class “urban professionals,” these refugees had typically already undergone “extensive” instrumental training in prerevolutionary Russia as an indicator of their socioeconomic positions.⁵⁷ Many such “[r]efugee musicians”⁵⁸ fell back onto these skills to make a living,⁵⁹ turning to work as performers or educators.⁶⁰ Of all their occupations, their work as pedagogues left the greatest impact on China. By 1937, roughly “half of the [Shanghai Conservatory’s] performance staff” had graduated from the Saint Petersburg Conservatory,⁶¹ making Russian “cultural heritage, musical skills, and practices”⁶² a major factor in the development of the Shanghai Conservatory.⁶³ This influence would stretch beyond the school, as such Russian musicians included among their students “the

⁵³ Xiao, “Tingguo Shanghai shizhengting dayue yinyuehui hou de ganxiang” 听过上海市政厅大乐音乐会后的感想 (A few thoughts after hearing the Concert of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra), in *Xiao Youmei quanji* 箫友梅全集 (Complete Writings of Xiao Youmei), 211, quoted in Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 129.

⁵⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 28, 12.

⁶¹ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 385.

⁶² Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12.

first generation of the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) musical figures."⁶⁴ These students, such as He Luting, future president of the Shanghai Conservatory, and Liu Xuean (1905-1985), one of the leading Chinese song writers of the twentieth century, helped shape the musical world of China for the next several decades. Thus, their Russian instructors shaped not only Shanghai's musical world, but the musical world of the future. Their importance reflects the overall focus of the Shanghai Conservatory, a focus centered on European and North American influences.

Xiao Youmei's efforts to promote both European and Chinese music at the conservatory did not succeed. Xiao, a firm supporter of "New Music," or "Western-format-based music practiced in China and by Chinese composers,"⁶⁵ wanted the conservatory to "synthesiz[e] both Chinese and Western traditions."⁶⁶ To that end, students took classes on both "Western and Chinese music [theory]" and often supplemented their training on "one or more Western instruments" with studies on a Chinese instrument.⁶⁷ Despite the inclusion of both musical traditions, however, the conservatory ended up leaning heavily towards Westernization. Part of this simply stemmed from the students: they valued "the cultural capital accrued by Western music" more than the study of Chinese music⁶⁸ and consequently pursued "Western music performance,"⁶⁹ not Chinese music.

The Conservatory's faculty and training promoted the development of Westernized musicians. Most of the school's faculty either came from Europe or had trained in Europe.⁷⁰ As mentioned above, 1937 saw a conservatory faculty about halfway comprised of Russian-trained musicians. Those from Russia included pianists Boris Lazareff and Boris Zakharov (1887-1943),

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁶ Yang, "Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism," 371.

⁶⁷ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128.

⁶⁸ Yang, "Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism," 371.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Chang, "His Influence," 26.

⁷¹ cellist I. Shevtzoff, ⁷² and vocalist Vladimir Shushlin (1896-1978).⁷³ Italian Arriago Foa (1900-1981) covered violin.⁷⁴ Huang Zi (1904-1938), a composition instructor and “one of the most popular and ... influential composer[s] in modern Chinese music history,”⁷⁵ studied music and psychology at Oberlin College and theory and composition at Yale.⁷⁶ In regards to training, the conservatory had five departments in total. Four—piano, voice, violin, and composition and theory—focused on “Western classical music.”⁷⁷ The remaining Chinese music department offered Chinese instruments such as erhu, dizi, pipa, and, briefly, qin and bili,⁷⁸ which many students studied alongside their European instrument.⁷⁹ Of the school’s 110 students in 1937, however, only two played a Chinese instrument as their primary instrument.⁸⁰ The rest focused on Western instruments. Most of the school’s music classes came from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “European musical repertoire” and concerts featuring both Chinese and European music grew “increasingly rare,” a departure from their regular occurrence ten years prior.⁸¹

The Shanghai Conservatory proved instrumental in Chinese musical development. The Shanghai Conservatory served as the first music conservatory in China.⁸² Initially accepting a class of twenty-seven students, the conservatory doubled its enrollment within the first year and had to find larger properties on multiple occasions.⁸³ While the first graduating class only

⁷¹ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 42nn2, 122.

⁷² Chang, “His Influence,” 25.

⁷³ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 385.

⁷⁴ Chang, “His Influence,” 25.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁷⁷ Cheung, “Chinese Music,” 164.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

⁷⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128.

⁸⁰ These students studied pipa, a Chinese four-stringed lute.

⁸¹ Chang, “His Influence,” 26.

⁸² Yang, “The Shanghai Conservatory,”: 27n3.

⁸³ Chang, “His Influence,” 24.

included three students, including Lee Hsien Ming,⁸⁴ 1937 brought the official enrollment up to 100 students.⁸⁵ The school would produce many future leaders of Chinese music, including He Luting, who would assume the roles of Minister of Culture of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and president of the Shanghai Conservatory in 1958,⁸⁶ Jiang Wenye (1910-1983), a prolific composer and eventual professor at the Central Conservatory,⁸⁷ and Liu Xuean, one of China's "foremost song writer[s]"⁸⁸ of the twentieth century. Their time at the Conservatory would prove essential in shaping them into the musical leaders of twentieth-century China.

Conclusion

The history and environment of China, Shanghai, and the Shanghai Conservatory promoted the creation and performance of music from or written in a European style. Some efforts did continue to promote Chinese music. As mentioned above, the Shanghai Conservatory did include a department of Chinese music, and many students studied Chinese instruments in addition to their training in European classical instruments.⁸⁹ The overall importance of Chinese folk music remained minimal, however, as the prestige and modernity associated with European music remained more attractive to Chinese musicians. Perhaps the most significant figure in the promotion of traditional Chinese music in twentieth-century China would eventually come in the form of a Russian composer: Alexander Tcherpnin.

⁸⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 127-128; the other two were Qiu Fusheng, another piano student of Zakharov's, and Yu Yixuan, a voice student.

⁸⁵ Chang, "His Influence," 25.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁸⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 128.

Chapter Three: Tcherepnin's Musical Upbringing and Philosophy

Biography

Tcherepnin's life before coming to Shanghai divides into his life in Russia, his life in Georgia, and his life in Paris. His Russian upbringing established his musical foundation. Tcherepnin's family surrounded him with music from an early age. His father, Nikolai Tcherepnin (1873-1945), composed, conducted at the Imperial Opera House, and taught conducting and composition at St. Petersburg Conservatory.¹ His mother Marie was an amateur mezzo-soprano who taught the five-year-old Alexander to write music notation.² Alexander, who then viewed music as "the very reason for [his] existence,"³ would compose throughout his childhood. By the time he turned 19, he had amassed multiple concerti, sonatas, and works for chamber ensembles, plus over a hundred short pieces.⁴ He studied with several teachers, but received no "regular music instruction"⁵ or lessons in traditional harmony until he began at St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1917.⁶ By that point, he had already developed the basic elements of his personal musical language and a sizeable collection of works.⁷ After a brief period at the

¹ Various sources spell Alexander's father's name as "Nikolai," "Nikolay," "Nicolai," and "Nicolas." In this thesis, I will use "Nikolai," the spelling Alexander Tcherepnin used when writing about his father; "The Tcherepnin Society Website – Welcome!" Tcherepnin Society, n.d., <https://tcherepnin.com>; Guy S. Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music of Alexander Tcherepnin: an Essay Together with a Comprehensive Project in Piano Performance," (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1974), 5, <https://ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/complete-piano-music-alexander-tcherepnin-essay/docview/302711094/se-2?accountid=4886>; Alexander Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin: a short Autobiography (1964)," *Tempo*, No. 130 (September 1979): 12; Ludmila Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin: The Saga of a Russian Émigré Composer*, ed. Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin, trans. Anne Winestein (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 3.

² Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 12; Alexander, who had already tried to write music down on his own, thus learned notation "before [he] learned the alphabet"; *ibid.*, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 12-24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 12-24; elements of his musical language include the combination of minor and major chords and the nine-step scale, on which he based many of his work; Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 14-15; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 13; Enrique Alberto Arias, "Alexander Tcherepnin's Thoughts on Music," *Perspectives on New Music* 21, no. ½ (Autumn 1982-Summer 1982): 140, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/832871>.

conservatory, Tcherepnin moved with his parents to Tiflis, Georgia, in 1918 to escape the Bolshevik Revolution.⁸

Tcherepnin's time in Georgia diversified and solidified his musical practices. The family stayed in the country for three years, during which time Alexander resumed his studies at the Tiflis branch of the Russian Conservatory. He also took on a variety of writing, performing, and composing jobs.⁹ His work as a music critic exposed him to a wide array of contemporary and classical compositions, which he reviewed with an "early maturity."¹⁰ As a musician, Tcherepnin conducted a variety of performances, gave solo concerts in Georgia and Armenia, and accompanied numerous soloists and theatrical productions.¹¹ Compositionally, Tcherepnin used this time to solidify his musical language. Distinctive elements include the continued use of his nine-step scale, increasingly virtuosic piano writing, and the adoption of Interpoint, a form of counterpoint Tcherepnin developed.¹² In 1921, following the Bolshevik invasion of Georgia and occupation of Tiflis, the Tcherepnin family fled to Paris.¹³

Tcherepnin's time in Paris expanded his global musical horizons. After concluding his formal musical studies in 1922, Tcherepnin performed concert tours across Europe and in the United States.¹⁴ He expanded his career eastwards in the 1930s with a 1931 world tour, which included performances in Greece, Crete, Palestine, and Egypt, and a 1932 tour of the Balkans.¹⁵

⁸ Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 10-11; Tiflis was the name of Tbilisi at the time.

⁹ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, trans. Anne Winestein, 16; Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 11.

¹⁰ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 19.

¹¹ Tcherepnin, letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, 1967, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 208; Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 11; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 20-23.

¹² Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 8-9; Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 14-15. For an explanation of Interpoint, see Tcherepnin's "Basic Elements of My Musical Language," available on the Tcherepnin Society website at https://www.tcherepnin.com/alex/basic_elem2.htm.

¹³ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 40.

¹⁴ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 15; he studied piano at the *École Normale de Musique* and counterpoint at the Paris Conservatory; *ibid.*, 10n1.

¹⁵ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 11.

Tcherepnin intended to follow these with another world tour in 1934, but ended up cancelling much of the trip to stay in East Asia. He would remain there for two years.

Influences

Russian culture served as one of Tcherepnin's earliest and most significant musical influences. In Russia, Tcherepnin grew up surrounded by the arts. Not only did he attend the Imperial Opera House to see his father conduct, but he also witnessed many rehearsals and private performances at the Tcherepnin home by such figures as Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), Cesar Cui (1835-1914), and Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953).¹⁶ His parents' many collaborators, friends, and relatives further exposed him to the works and theories of Russian artists, writers, and poets.¹⁷ While he did encounter contemporary European music in his earlier years,¹⁸ the outbreak of World War I in 1914 completely isolated him from modern European musical and ideological developments.¹⁹ This artistic separation from Western Europe allowed him to creating a musical identity firmly based in Russian music.²⁰

Tcherepnin also used folk music as another major feature of his compositional practices. Tcherepnin's interest in folk music traces back to his years in Russia, where he incorporated direct quotes or imitations of sacred and secular music in his works.²¹ His 1918 *Sonatine romantique*, for example, imitates the bells and chants of Holy Week at St. Petersburg's St.

¹⁶ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 3; Guy S. Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 6; Tcherepnin's works would go on to reflect the influences of the Mighty Five and of Prokofiev, who was Nikolai's composition student and frequent visitor; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 18-19; Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 31.

¹⁷ Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 12; on Marie's side, Alexander was the great-grandnephew of stage designer Alexandre Benois (1870-1960). Tcherepnin remembers Benois, impressario Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), and choreographer Michel Fokine (1880-1942) visiting to talk with his father, who conducted for the Ballet Russes. He also recalls meeting writers and poets like Vasily Kamensky (1884-1961) and Nikolay Gumilev (1886-1921).

¹⁸ He travelled with his father when Nikolai conducted in cities like Paris, Rome, Berlin, and London; Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 6.

¹⁹ Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 15.

²⁰ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 33; Arias mentions other specific influences on Tcherepnin, including Mussorgsky and the Russian liturgical style; *ibid.*, 28-33.

²¹ Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 83-84.

Nicholas Cathedral.²² This practice continued through his time in Georgia, where his exposure to popular and liturgical Georgian music played a key role in establishing his musical language.²³ Tiflis's cosmopolitan nature and the concerts Tcherepnin performed across Transcaucasia also introduced him to the folk music of other nations, such as Azerbaijan and Armenia.²⁴ This interest in folk music would eventually inspire Tcherepnin's second compositional period.

A thread of East Asian influences runs throughout Tcherepnin's compositional and personal life. In Russia, composers surrounding Tcherepnin like his father, Borodin, and Rimsky-Korsakov exposed him to East Asian musical materials through their music.²⁵ In Georgia, he demonstrated his own interest with a favorable review of *Madame Butterfly*²⁶ and a knowledge of "Oriental melodic types."²⁷ In Paris, he based his ballet *Ajanta's Frescoes* on materials from India, including recordings of music from India.²⁸ While not strictly musical in their nature, his letters to his parents from the late 1920s further emphasize Tcherepnin's interest in Asian culture. These writings include comments on his recent readings of Chinese history, an excerpt on exoticism in India from a 460-year-old diary, and a note that his wife's friend's "many things [brought] from China and Siam ... sparked [Tcherepnin's] interest in travelling there."²⁹

²² Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 15.

²³ The polyphony used in Georgian church music would feature especially prominently in his musical development. Tcherepnin, having rejected "impressionism and ... [its] vagueness" from an early musical stage, determined to use "clear-partwriting [*sic*]" to achieve musical progress; Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 15.

²⁴ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 11; Tcherepnin, letter to Grigori Shneerson, 1962, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 27.

²⁵ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 11; Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 17.

²⁶ Clipping of an article by Alexander Tcherepnin, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 18-19.

²⁷ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 9, 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8; Anna Pavlova commissioned the ballet following her visit to India in 1923. She provided Tcherepnin with the materials; *ibid.*, 8.

²⁹ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 107; Alexander Tcherepnin to Nikolai and Marie Tcherepnin, June 25, 1927, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 107.

Another key element of Tcherepnin's music came in the form of integrating Asian and European music. In his youth, Tcherepnin observed his father and other composers incorporate Asian elements into their works.³⁰ After moving to Tiflis, Alexander himself started "to study and love" both Georgian folk music and classical European music.³¹ The combination of these influences contributed to Alexander's musical philosophy. His opinions at the time appear most clearly in his praise of composers Zacharia Paliashvili (1871-1933) and Dimitri Arakishvili (1873-1953). In a review of their works, Tcherepnin commends Paliashvili and Arakishvili for "combin[ing] the East and Europe seamlessly, the national and the international," and crafting "an entire national root [that] is shaped according to the European technique."³² This emphasis on the value of using East Asian music in a Western style reflects his beliefs on the merits of each.

Tcherepnin's views on the relative merits of Russian, western European, and East Asian culture shaped his appreciation for Asian art, an important influence on his musical philosophy. In his "A Short Autobiography," written in 1964, Tcherepnin claims that "the West" possesses a culture superior to Russia's. He also ranks aspects of Russian culture above those of East Asian cultures, stating, "Russia has a message to bring to the East, as it has a message to receive from the West." Despite these evaluations, however, Tcherepnin argues in the same article that "the East" provides important artistic and spiritual contributions to Russia. Europe's "cultural superiority" gives Russia "an inferiority complex," and its contributions to Russian art offer very little spiritually. The East, on the other hand, seems like Russia's equal and has offered "obvious

³⁰ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 11; although written over a decade before Alexander's birth, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* serves as a prime example.

³¹ Tcherepnin, letter to Slonimsky, 1967, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 208.

³² Alexander Tcherepnin, "V. Dolidze's Benefit Performance," January 11, 1920, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 24; Tcherepnin credits the works in question, Paliashvili's *Absalom and Eteri* and Arakishvili's *Legend of Chota Rostaveli*, with "creat[ing] a whole epoch in the musical creativity of Georgia"; *ibid.*, 25.

and important” spiritual influences in music and artwork.³³ This tempered but sincere appreciation for East Asian culture would appear in Tcherepnin’s visit to China.³⁴

The impact of Eurasianism on Tcherepnin’s view of Russian identity influenced his interest in the music of the East Asia. Eurasianism poses that Russia and its people belong neither to Europe nor to Asia but to their own geographical and cultural region called “Eurasia.” Tcherepnin’s interest in the theory came from his search for “a deeper meaning of art” in the 1920s. During this time, he encountered the Eurasian idea that the modern Russian people descended from both the Mongolian and Russian peoples. This concept appealed to Tcherepnin philosophically and helped him explain his connection to East Asia: it was part of his Russian heritage. This affiliation, in turn, meant that East Asian music felt not “exotic” but “familiar” to him, a familiarity furthered by the “great artistic and spiritual value” of Asian influences in Russia.³⁵ The idea of a Eurasian Russia would continue to factor into his appreciation for Asian music and influence his eventual transition into folklore.

Tcherepnin’s time in Paris between 1921 and 1933 established his personal musical identity as a Russian composer. Despite his exposure to musical figures, ideologies, and developments not available to him in Georgia, Tcherepnin’s music changed very little after he arrived in Paris.³⁶ Part of his consistency may have stemmed from the similarities between his personal musical style and general European musical trends at the time. Tcherepnin went so far as to say that “[his] way of thinking was ... identical with the views of Western composers of

³³ These influences appear in Russian iconography and music, including Borodin’s *Prince Igor*; Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 17.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ While aspects of his form changed and his use of his techniques grew, according to Korabelnikova, “strict [and] rational,” he had already established his “uniqueness of expressive language, especially in the sphere of harmony and polyphony”; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 77, 75; for a list of Tcherepnin’s other traits at the time, see Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 75.

[his] generation,” including the inclination “toward polyphony [and] the organization of chromatic writing.”³⁷ He, however, attributes his stability to the Parisian environment, stating in 1967,

Paris is remarkable in that an artist or composer who arrives here from another country is not assimilated; on the contrary, he quite often becomes more fundamentally and aesthetically linked to his native land. It is no accident that Nadia Boulanger, who taught composers from many countries, emphasized this principle: Be What You Are. Yes, the Parisian artistic climate helped you think in your native language, encouraged you to aspire to national originality. And I must say that, having lived in France for over thirty years, that helped me remain a Russian composer.³⁸

This emphasis on his Russian identity did not prevent Tcherepnin from using music from other cultures in his work.³⁹ Whatever music he employed, however, he still viewed himself as a Russian composer. To Tcherepnin, a composer’s musical identity transcended the tools the composer used. This idea would later appear in his educational practices in Asia, where Tcherepnin urged his students to write from their own musical heritage and culture.

Two Stages of Compositional Development

Tcherepnin’s compositional development prior to his time in China divides into two main stages: “think[ing] of art for art’s sake” and “seek[ing] refuge in operating with folklore.” During World War II, he entered a third period, which he described as writing music “to serve humanity.”⁴⁰ In his first time, Tcherepnin wrote music because he wanted to write music, not necessarily for any larger goal, as in his second stage, or for a moral purpose, as in his third. Tcherepnin describes this period as a time full of “self-imposed technical formulas” that related

³⁷ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 16

³⁸ Tcherepnin interviewed by G. Haimovsky in “Rasskazyvaet Aleksandr Tcherepnin,” quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 66.

³⁹ Even in his later years, he continued to pull from a wide range of musical and cultural sources. Examples include his *Seven Songs on Chinese Poems* (1952) and *Georgiana* (1960); Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 85, 95

⁴⁰ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 18; these divisions are based on Tcherepnin’s musical philosophy during his career.

to tools such as his nine-step scale and Interpoint.⁴¹ While Tcherepnin used many of these tools “instinctive[ly]” in his early works, only recognizing and analyzing them following his start at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, he employed them deliberately later on.⁴² Works from this period did well for the composer, as demonstrated by his *Ajanta's Frescoes* and *Concerto da camera*.⁴³ By the late 1920s, however, he believed his compositional style had led him into a type of musical “cul de sac [*sic*]” and that his works ran the risk growing too cerebral for an audience to understand.⁴⁴ Tcherepnin’s eventual weariness of what he later described as his “too abstract approach” would lead to his second compositional stage by way of folk music.⁴⁵

Tcherepnin’s writings demonstrate his belief that his second period’s use of folk music corrected his compositional issues. That he viewed his first stage as problematic appears most clearly in his “A Short Autobiography” and his breakdown of his musical stages.⁴⁶ In the first, he states he looked into folk music with the intention of “get[ting] away from [his] own musical formulas.”⁴⁷ In the second, he depicts his first period as “the Mousetrap of Cultural Music.”⁴⁸ That Tcherepnin viewed folk music as the remedy to these ills is similarly apparent in his writings. He describes his second stage as not only “healing through folklore”⁴⁹ and a “refuge ... both philosophically and musically”⁵⁰ but as “an escape” from his earlier style.⁵¹ Breaking out of the cultural mousetrap, he wrote, allowed him to enter “the World of natural Art, that is

⁴¹ Ibid., 16.

⁴² Ibid., 14.

⁴³ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 18; *Ajanta's Frescoes* earned him international recognition and *Concerto da camera* won him the Schott prize in 1925; Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 75; Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 8.

⁴⁴ Tcherepnin quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 9.

⁴⁵ Tcherepnin, letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, 1967, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 210.

⁴⁶ The latter is found on page 27 of Arias’s *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*.

⁴⁷ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin, 17.

⁴⁸ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 27.

⁴⁹ Tcherepnin, letter to Slonimsky, 1967, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 211

⁵⁰ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 18.

⁵¹ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 27.

Folklore.”⁵² This repeated idea that Tcherepnin needed to flee into his second period highlights both his dissatisfaction with his first stage and the importance he placed on folk music.

Tcherepnin’s views on the nature of folk music shaped his appreciation of its many traditions. According to Tcherepnin, folk music is analogous to human anatomy. A painter who understands the human body can use its “eternal lines” to breathe life into a work of art. A painter’s nationality or style does not matter—the main elements of the human form remain consistent, no matter how the artist chooses to use them.⁵³ In the same way, a composer who understands folk music can draw on common elements of music found around the world. By using these “lines of musical survival” that have lasted for centuries, the composer can draw “nearer to people”⁵⁴ in his works, no matter how he employs his material. In the 1920s and 1930s, this idea satisfied Tcherepnin’s desires to “get away from [his] *deus ex machina* kind of [musical] production.”⁵⁵ As a result, he reexamined his collections of Azerbaijan, Persian, Georgian, and Russian folk tunes and searched for folk music on his tours of Egypt and Palestine.⁵⁶ Tcherepnin did not believe that all folk music had the same nature.⁵⁷ Rather, he believed that “the Folklore of all countries ... has the same eternal value.”⁵⁸ This belief would go on to shape how he interacted with Chinese music and composers in the 1930s.

Tcherepnin transitioned gradually between his compositional periods. In the late 1920s, he began to question his highly technical composition style. He recognized that his nine-step scale “no longer completely satisfied [him]” and that the “line of compression” he had been

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 17; Tcherepnin includes Picasso’s “abstract constructions” among the masterpieces that draw on these eternal lines; *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16-17.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁷ In fact, he actively sought to perceive “the subtle differences between each country’s folk heritage”; Tcherepnin, quoted in Arias, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 141.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

following in his most recent compositions would not remain a practical musical tool.⁵⁹ Instead of discarding his strategies entirely, however, he shifted his focus from the nine-step scale to intervals and chords. These he categorized “into ‘firm’ ones without thirds and ‘soft’ ones with thirds,” a division he then used as the foundation for his “new formal construction.”⁶⁰ His interest in folk music did appear in his works of this period. His Piano Concerto No. 3, written between 1931 and 1932 and the first work he completed in this system, used both his new strategy and an Egyptian melody Tcherepnin had heard sung by boatmen working on the Nile.⁶¹ According to Tcherepnin, however, he did not yet view folk music as part of his musical cure. That transition only came in 1933 with his *Russian Dances*, his five-moment work for orchestra.⁶²

Tcherepnin’s *Russian Dances* played a pivotal role in the composer’s transition to folk music. In 1933, as Tcherepnin wearied of his compositions’ complexity and searched for a simpler “technical vocabulary,”⁶³ his publisher Benno Balam requested “a suite of Russian dances.” Tcherepnin, relying on folk songs from both his Russian upbringing and various collections, responded with the five-section *Russian Dances* for orchestra. Initially writing in a “chamber-like manner,” Tcherepnin realized after hearing a rehearsal that he needed a stronger sound and consequently re-orchestrated the set with “color, correct distribution, and rich

⁵⁹ Tcherepnin, letter to Slonimsky, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 210; Tcherepnin states that he “realised that if I continued with the line of compression . . . , that eventually nothing would be left”; *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁶¹ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 74-75.

⁶² Tcherepnin, letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 210-211; Tcherepnin wrote that he spent 1930 through at least part of 1933 focused on “soft and hard intervals, rhythm for its own sake, [and] Eurasianism.” His “healing through folklore” began as a separate stage later on in 1933; *ibid.*, 210-211.

⁶³ Enrique Alberto Arias, “Alexander Tcherepnin’s Thoughts on Music,” *Perspectives on New Music* 21, no. 1/2 (Autumn 1982-Summer 1983): 141, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/832871>.

doubling.” In so doing, he created what he later called his “first truly folkloristic work.”⁶⁴ Recognizing the effectiveness of folk music as an antidote to his previous style, Tcherepnin continued to investigate folk music in his other works, thus entering his second musical stage. After travelling to Crete, Egypt, and Palestine, Tcherepnin continued his investigation into folklore by venturing to China.

Tcherepnin’s interviews with the *Shanghai Dawn* and *The North-China Daily News* demonstrate the roles his musical evolution and Eurasian beliefs played in his decision to visit the Far East. Likely in 1934, Tcherepnin told the *Shanghai Dawn* that he came to China “because [his] work required it.” He explains that he wants to find “village singing, ... true national song in which the national soul is so clearly reflected” because such “simple, innocent singing” holds “the source, the beginning, the basis of any music.”⁶⁵ Tcherepnin hopes that he will discover “people still sing[ing] in their own way, with the internal voice of the soul,” whose music will “perhaps ... form the basis for a new phase of [his] artistic development.”⁶⁶ This search for the next stage in his artistry reflects Tcherepnin’s gradual transition from one period to the next, as Tcherepnin later stated that by 1934, he had already entered into “healing through folklore.”⁶⁷ This idea of using East Asian music as his foundation for new musical development would also go on to factor into his relationship with his students and their usage of their own traditional folk music.

⁶⁴ Tcherepnin, private letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 210; Tcherepnin used the terms “folk music,” “musical folklore,” and “folklore” interchangeably; see Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 17.

⁶⁵ Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 108; as Tcherepnin was already in Shanghai when the interview took place, the interview could not have taken place any sooner than 1934.

⁶⁶ Alexander Tcherepnin, interviewed in “The Composer A. Tcherepnin Speaks About His Work. A Special Interview for the *Shanghai Dawn*,” *The Shanghai Dawn*, undated, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 108.

⁶⁷ Tcherepnin, private letter to Nicolas Slonimsky, quoted in Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 211.

In *The North-China Daily News*, Tcherepnin stated that music had surrounded him for so long that the time had come for him to “refresh [him]self at its source” by “hear[ing] the songs labourers sing at their work, and that the beggars chant in the street if they chant in China. . . . It is not in the conservatories that student should seek his training, but in the villages, and wherever common folk gather” because there, “[t]hey express what is in their hearts.” In Europe, “artificiality” had taken over, with street sellers going from singing “songs of their own creation” to “hum[ming] popular tunes.” According to Tcherepnin, “[t]he original flavouring is gone.” This lack, then, led him to look for “the songs of the people” on his travels, “hop[ing] to find something of [the original flavouring].”⁶⁸

Tcherepnin explains that his at least partially Eurasian views served to motivate his visit to China. In the *Shanghai Dawn* interview, Tcherepnin states that one reason he chose to “search for [folk singing] in the East” was because “we Russians are not really Europeans. . . . Russia has not banished the Mongols. She threw off their yoke and assimilated them.”⁶⁹ Interestingly, Tcherepnin prefaces his remark by indicating that he “do[es] not want to label [himself] Eurasian,” as it “cannot reflect [his] deepest beliefs.”⁷⁰ While he does not explain how these deepest beliefs differed from Eurasianism, Tcherepnin held to at least some Eurasian geographic and ethnological tenets through at least 1964.⁷¹ However much he agreed with the whole at the time of the interview, elements of Eurasianism deepened Tcherepnin’s already significant interest in East Asia and helped provide the impetus for him to visit and remain in China.

⁶⁸ Alexander Tcherepnin, interviewed in “Young Composer in Shanghai,” *The North-China Daily News*, 12 April, 1934, quoted in Chang, “His Influence,” 38.

⁶⁹ Tcherepnin in “The Composer A. Tcherepnin,” quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 108, 109.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

⁷¹ In his autobiography, Tcherepnin claimed that “Russia is as much a European country as she is an Asiatic one—a true ‘Eurasian’ empire both geographically and ethnically”; Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 17.

Conclusion

Tcherepnin's personal experiences, musical influences, and compositional stages allowed him to exert a positive influence on Chinese composers by preparing him to appreciate and respect Chinese music and culture. Perhaps most significantly, Tcherepnin believed that composers benefitted when writing from their own musical background. That does not mean he didn't see value in composers using music or ideas from other cultures. Given his background and the fact that he came to East Asia in the hopes of local folk music inspiring his own compositions, that would be highly hypocritical. Rather, his personal experiences showed him that composers benefitted from integrating their own cultural music and background in their works. This idea would bear fruit throughout and beyond Tcherepnin's time in China, including his composition competition and publishing company.

Chapter Four: Tcherepnin in China

Overview

Tcherepnin initially came to China on a concert tour in order to find and learn more about folk music and art forms Asia.¹ Avray Strok, Shanghai's "top musical impresario"² and, according to pianist Artur Rubinstein, "the only one who arranged tours in Japan, China and the Philippine Islands,"³ scheduled Tcherepnin to embark on "a world-wide concert tour in the spring and summer of 1934."⁴ The tour itself, "scheduled to begin in China in April,"⁵ was to travel to "Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Egypt, ... Palestine"⁶ and Europe.⁷ While each country was only meant to claim a few weeks of his time, his stops in China and Japan so "entranced" Tcherepnin with "what [he] saw and heard" that he cancelled the remainder of his tour and "stayed in China and Japan for an entire year."⁸ While he did travel to Europe and to the United States for a year between April 1935 and April 1936,⁹ he then returned to East Asia "for another year of concerts, of teaching, and of learning."¹⁰ He remained until 1937, at which point he went back to Europe to join Lee Hsien Ming, a Chinese concert pianist he met in China in 1934 and would marry in 1938 as the culmination of their "long international courtship."¹¹

¹ Chang, "His Influence," 37.

² Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 18, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=114715&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

³ Artur Rubinstein, *My Many Years* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 355.

⁴ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 22.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Alexander Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Episodes," 122.

⁸ Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 17.

⁹ Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 88, Figure 1.

¹⁰ Tcherepnin, "Alexander Tcherepnin," 17.

¹¹ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 15.

A Failing Marriage

Tcherepnin initially remained in China to stay near Ming. Then a piano student at Shanghai Conservatory, Ming met Tcherepnin on May 13, 1934, after the composer performed his Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Municipal Symphony of Shanghai. Tcherepnin felt an immediate attraction to her and soon began work on a composition inspired by the inception of his love for her, *Hommage à la Chine*.¹² By May 21 of the same year, Tcherepnin claimed his desire to stay near Ming made China “captivat[ing] and fascinat[ing].” Although he travelled to Japan in July 1934 to escape the summer in Peiping, as Beijing was known at the time, Tcherepnin cancelled all of his scheduled performances outside of Japan and China in order to stay in China through February of 1935.¹³ This strategy to remain near Ming backfired, however, as Ming left China in November of 1934 in order to study piano in Brussels on a three-year scholarship.¹⁴ While the two eventually married in 1938,¹⁵ their courtship and its impact on Tcherepnin’s first marriage would prove critical to Tcherepnin’s decision to return to and stay in China.

Tcherepnin’s dissatisfaction with his marriage began long before he met Ming. In 1926, Tcherepnin married Louisine Weekes, an “extremely wealthy American socialite ... of forty-one,”¹⁶ after a two-year affair. Their marriage started off inauspiciously: Tcherepnin had been “terrified”¹⁷ at Weekes’s declaration that they could marry when she divorced her then-husband. Marrying her “with secret reluctance,”¹⁸ Tcherepnin resented their agreement that he would

¹² Lily Chou and Benjamin Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” in *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Compendium*, ed. Benjamin Folkman (New York: The Tcherepnin Society, Inc., 2008), 123.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 15.

¹⁶ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

spend half of his time “travel[ling] and concertizing ... for his career” and the rest living and travelling with Weekes.¹⁹ By the time the couple travelled to China with Weekes’s daughter Hathaway “Happy” in 1934, Tcherepnin viewed their marriage with “quiet desperation.”²⁰

Weekes and Tcherepnin’s marital troubles stemmed in part from Weekes’s support of the family. Weekes loved Tcherepnin dearly and supported him generously. However, the “professional and personal sacrifices” Tcherepnin felt obliged to make in return,²¹ such as “isolation from the music world” at Louisine’s home in Islip, New York, and attendance at numerous parties and card games no matter what he would rather do, frustrated him.²² Weekes, in turn, struggled to view Tcherepnin’s writing and performing as “anything but a hobby, perversely pursued to keep him from her side.”²³ Her generosity, furthermore, “kept Tcherepnin on a very short rein,” as she paid his expenses as they came instead of providing Tcherepnin with an allowance or other sum of money to control.²⁴ Angry with himself for what he saw as both “spineless subservience to Louisine ... [and] ingratitude towards her,” but still very fond of his wife, Tcherepnin grew restless. While Weekes knew Tcherepnin had grown dissatisfied, she, according to Folkman, “had every reason for believing that his dependence on her—and his very real personal affection for her—would bind them forever.”²⁵ The overall state of their marriage, however, would grow untenable over the next few years, ending in divorce in the late 1930s.²⁶

The road to this dissolution ran straight through China.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 121.

²¹ Ibid., 122.

²² Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 121.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 122.

²⁶ Ibid., 129.

Tcherepnin's marriage did not immediately fail after he met Ming. Tcherepnin appears to not have seen her from before his removal to Japan until his return to China in November of 1934. He, Weekes, and Happy had lived and travelled together in the interim, and continued on together after. Tcherepnin's affections for Ming remained, however. When she left China on November 13, he accompanied her to her ship and "threw her one of his gloves" as a keepsake until they met again.²⁷ His affection persisted throughout their separation, with Tcherepnin referencing Ming and naming her five-and-a-half-year-old brother Lee Sing as China's youngest composer in the penultimate paragraph of his 1935 article for *The Musical Quarterly*, "Music in Modern China."²⁸ After leaving Asia in February 1935, Tcherepnin spent two months in New York with Weekes before travelling on to Europe to see his parents.

Tcherepnin's time in Europe laid the foundation for his second trip to China. After visiting his parents, Tcherepnin joined Ming in Brussels for the day before returning to France.²⁹ She later joined him in Paris for a ten-day master class series, where he "introduced her to many musical friends" and "felt more that ever how ... dear [she was] to [him], and [that his] life would [be] straightened out ... if it [ever became] possible for [them] to become united."³⁰ That union would wait for another two years—the day that Ming left Paris, Weekes arrived.³¹

Tcherepnin soon informed her of his feelings for and time spent with Ming.³² While Weekes initially suggested that she and Tcherepnin "see if [their] relations could be mended,"³³ the failure of their attempts convinced her that Tcherepnin would leave her when she left for her next trip to Monte Carlo. As a parting gesture, she left him "1,500 dollars ... and a note ...

²⁷ Ibid., 125.

²⁸ Tcherepnin, "Music in Modern China," 332.

²⁹ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 126.

³⁰ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 126.

³¹ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 126.

³² Ibid.

³³ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 126.

wishing [Tcherepnin] the fulfillment of [his] dreams and promising further help if [he] should need it.” When he received her generous gift, Tcherepnin “felt like a skunk, selfish and guilty,”³⁴ and decided to remain with her. While he did attempt to meet with Ming later that summer in Salzburg, he found that he could not follow through with it: “I [had] no right to expose Hsieng Ming to the talk of Salzburg, [had] no right to associate with Hsien Ming until [I became] free...to make [her] my wife, and ... my duty [was] to return to Louisine and stay with her until I [found] the courage to terminate our relationship.”³⁵ Explaining himself to Ming via letter, Tcherepnin returned to his wife.

Tcherepnin’s decision to stay with Weekes played a major role in his second visit to China. While the family had already been considering travelling back to China that winter, Weekes found the idea of Tcherepnin remaining “half a world away from Ming” for “an extended period” reassuring.³⁶ Happy’s desire to join them further sweetened the idea, although conflict would arise between Weekes and she before the trip reached its conclusion.

Tcherepnin’s interest in the trip, however, arose once again from his feelings for Ming. Not yet ready to divorce Weekes, Tcherepnin thought that assisting “Chinese musicians in China and promoting the cause of music in China”³⁷ would allow him to realize his affection for Ming.³⁸ Unified in their desire to reach Asia, if not in their motivation, the family arrived in Japan in April 1936, with Tcherepnin leaving for China in May.³⁹ Tcherepnin found some fulfillment of his desire, providing “free lessons to Chinese composers and pianists.”⁴⁰ Weekes’s wish,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 126.

³⁷ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 126.

³⁸ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 126.

³⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁴⁰ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 129.

however, proved futile. While Tcherepnin did not see Ming for an extended time, the state of Tcherepnin and Weeks's marriage only worsened.

Tcherepnin's marital difficulties worsened on the second trip to China. While Ming remained in Europe, Tcherepnin still associated Shanghai with her. He also enjoyed the additional benefit of the city's "congenial work atmosphere." After the family visited Shanghai for an undescribed "engagement," Tcherepnin decided to stay. While Happy also preferred Shanghai—she "had fallen in love with a Shanghai Eurasian boy"—Weekes did not, and the ensuing "domestic climate [became] nigh-unbearable."⁴¹ After staying behind while Weekes and Happy travelled back to Peiping in January 1937, Tcherepnin "obstinately refused to return," only rejoining them with great reluctance in Shanghai on February 18.⁴² While they remained married through the trip, the two finally separated for good in September 1937. Oddly enough, they "ultimately emerged from their troubles as good friends."⁴³ Tcherepnin invited Weekes to the premiere of his *The Marriage* and, as the premiere fell on Weeks's birthday, gave her a "hand-drawn birthday card."⁴⁴ Weekes, for her part, with still provided Tcherepnin with money, allowed him to use her piano, and let him to stay with her for two months—even after he had moved out of her home.⁴⁵ They remained on good terms "for the rest of their lives."⁴⁶

Tcherepnin's failing marriage and love for Ming helped motivate his involvement in Chinese music education during his second visit to China. As mentioned above, Tcherepnin thought that helping Chinese composers would prove a suitable working out of his love for

⁴¹ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 128.

⁴² Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 129; Tcherepnin later wrote that he would rather have fallen out of the airplane taking him to Peiping than complete the journey.

⁴³ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 9.

Ming.⁴⁷ In China, Tcherepnin's family difficulties led him to "immers[e] himself still more deeply in his [educational] work" in both Shanghai and Peiping.⁴⁸ In Shanghai, he conducted his *gratis* lessons for Chinese composers and pianists⁴⁹ and appeared in his role of Honorary Professor at the Conservatory. His final concert in Asia took place in Shanghai on March 11, 1937 at "the McTyre School."⁵⁰ In Peiping, he also took advantage of his "warm friendships with his Chinese colleagues."⁵¹

The First Trip

Tcherepnin's initial arrival in China set the tone for his remaining visit and eventual return. First, his marriage and its unravelling played a key role in the visit. When Tcherepnin told Weekes about Strok's proposed tour, she surprised Tcherepnin by giving her support to the idea—given her "inviolable claim on half his time," he could not take so long a tour without her accompaniment. Despite Tcherepnin's fears, Weekes thought that the family remaining abroad for so long a time would break up the romantic relationship her daughter Happy had formed with an "undesirable" Hungarian count.⁵² She therefore gave the plan her blessing, and the family arrived in Shanghai in April 1934. In May of that same year, however, Tcherepnin met Ming, signalling the beginning of the end for Weekes and Tcherepnin.

The second way Tcherepnin's visit set the tone was in Tcherepnin's growing love for Chinese history and culture. Prior to his trip, he had already evinced an interest in Chinese culture through his letters and friends. In China, however, Tcherepnin fell deeply in love with the living culture he saw in front of him. When he and his family travelled in May 1934 to Peiping,

⁴⁷ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 126.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁹ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 129.

⁵⁰ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 129.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 121.

as Beijing was then known, they “never tired” of the city’s many historic and cultural sites, visiting everywhere from the bazaars to temples, the lakes to the theaters, the *hutungs*, “small lanes,” to the Forbidden City.⁵³ Tcherepnin went on to declare Beijing on par with Rome and Jerusalem as one of the “three world towns worthy to live in.”⁵⁴ These cities, “the greatest cultural centers of the past,”⁵⁵ stood as the only places a person could genuinely perceive the boundless abundance of a timeless city, where “anything or everything ... might be imbued with profound meaning.”⁵⁶ “To say that [Tcherepnin and his family] fell in love with Peiping,” he wrote, would understate “the great internal joy” they derived from visiting the city.⁵⁷ This passion for Chinese culture would further manifest itself in his passion for Chinese music.

The third way Tcherepnin’s trip laid the foundation for his stay was Tcherepnin’s clear interest in and appreciation of Chinese music and instruments from the start of his trip. “Quite early” on, he watched a Chinese opera and, during his visit to the Shanghai Conservatory in 1934, observed performances by pipa virtuoso Professor Chou Ying and composer Tang Xiao-Lin on erhu. Tcherepnin would go on to incorporate Chinese vocal stylings in his “fleshing out of the unfinished Mussorgsky opera, *The Marriage*”⁵⁸ and to include Chinese musical elements in his own original works. In Beijing, he pursued “intensive study of Chinese music with experts in Chinese music,”⁵⁹ including taking up the pipa under the tutelage of famous pipa player Cao Anhe (1905-2004) and “learn[ing] basic Chinese notation systems.”⁶⁰ His engagement with and understanding of Chinese music would play a crucial role in his work with Chinese musicians.

⁵³ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 124.

⁵⁶ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 124.

⁵⁷ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 124.

⁵⁸ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 123.

⁵⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 165.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 159.

The fourth example of Tcherepnin's tone throughout his stay was his work to make his music accessible to the Chinese people. During his May 13th performance with the Municipal Symphony, Tcherepnin felt perturbed at the realization that no Chinese musicians played in the orchestra and few Chinese individuals attended the concert. When he recognized a similar lack of Chinese attendees at his concerts in Peiping and Tientsin, he requested that his manager in Peiping take out advertisements in Chinese-language newspapers for his concerts and allow Chinese students to buy "special reduced-price tickets," as the typical fees far exceeded the financial capability of the students.⁶¹ Eventually, and only after threatening to cancel performances, Tcherepnin arranged to have his concert programs printed in both Chinese and English.⁶² Both as a performer and as teacher, he not only promoted Chinese music through his performances but through his generosity. Tcherepnin "never accepted payment for playing in schools," and all of his teaching in China for both his composition and his piano students went without "remuneration."⁶³ He also worked to make learning music more accessible to students. In addition to his concert work, he wrote a series of piano etudes based on the pentatonic scale so that Chinese piano students would not have to learn a new tonal system as well as a new instrument.

Contributions

Tcherepnin's contributions to Chinese music education demonstrated his investment in the development of young Chinese musicians. In May 1934, dismayed by the lack of Asian musical elements in the works of Chinese composers, he "sponsored a competition...open to any Chinese composer, for a piano piece written originally for piano, but in [a] Chinese idiom."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 124.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁴ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 123.

This competition would prove invaluable to the winner, composer He Luting, who went on to eventually assume the role of Director of the Shanghai Conservatory. Later on in that same year, now concerned with the education of Chinese piano students, Tcherepnin wrote a series of etudes based around “the pentatonic scale” so that the students could master a foreign instrument without having to simultaneously master a foreign musical language.⁶⁵ Tcherepnin would later write that these etudes “helped teach Chinese and Japanese musicians to remain true to their own heritage,”⁶⁶ one of his primary goals in working with Chinese and Japanese students.

Tcherepnin's competition developed partly out of his views on the universal application of European instruments and ensembles. Tcherepnin believed that some instruments belonged not to one country or another but to the international community as a whole. Naming them “international instruments,” Tcherepnin believed that “perfect[ed] European instruments,” when used well, demonstrated the national style of a composer, not of the instrument’s country of origin. As an example, Tcherepnin highlighted the piano, which he claimed “can sound Spanish when used by a Spanish composer, French when used by a French one, Russian if used by a Russian.”⁶⁷ This mindset may have developed out of Tcherepnin's own personal experiences. A virtuosic pianist himself, he had used the instrument to represent Russian and Georgian styles in works such as his *Transcriptions Slaves* for solo piano, which pulled from Russian influences, and *Songs and Dances for Cello and Piano*, which pulled from Georgian, Russian, Kazakh, and “Tartar” music.⁶⁸ His works for European ensembles further embraced this mindset, such as his *Suite Georgienne* for piano and orchestra and *Russian Dances* for orchestra. Tcherepnin would

⁶⁵ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 124.

⁶⁶ Tcherepnin, letter to Grigori Shneerson, May 6, 1965, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 110.

⁶⁷ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 123.

⁶⁸ Tcherepnin, Alexander, “Basic Elements of My Musical Language,” in *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Compendium*, 89-106; Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 90; in this situation, “Tartar” refers to “any of a group of Turkic peoples found mainly in the Tartar Republic of Russian and parts of Siberia and central Asia.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “Tatar,” accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Tatar>.

go on to put his money where his mouth was by writing a series of pentatonic piano exercises and sponsoring a composition competition in China.

Tcherepnin's pentatonic works from Opus 51 to Opus 53 demonstrate both his concern for his students and his appreciation for Chinese musical elements. Published in 1936, Tcherepnin's *Exercices techniques sur la Gamme pentatonique (Technical Studies on the Pentatonic Scale)*, Op. 53, allowed "student to practice exercises in" a familiar musical system.⁶⁹ His *Étude de Piano sur la Gamme Pentatonique (Piano Study on the Pentatonic Scale)*, Op. 51, further developed this idea, moving from practice exercises to performance pieces. This set included twelve *Bagatelles chinoises*, in which Tcherepnin incorporates Chinese folk melodies and "typically European dance rhythms" as though to demonstrate "the universality of the pentatonic system."⁷⁰ Tcherepnin took matters even further with his *Cinq Études de Concert (Five Concert Studies)*, Op. 52, five "demanding pieces for the concert stage"⁷¹ that pull from both pentatonicism and "elements of Chinese music, theater, and culture."⁷² "Punch and Judy" and "Shadow Play" draw on material from "popular Chinese shadow and puppet theater," while "Chant" pulls from Buddhist ritual singing and accompaniment.⁷³ "The Lute" mimics the qin, the Chinese seven-stringed zither, with "special effects of touch and pedal."⁷⁴ "Hommage à la Chine," part of the set and the first piece Tcherepnin wrote out of his love for Ming, stands as "one of the first examples of a solo Western instrumental work that imitates the idiom of a Chinese instrument, the four-stringed *pipa*."⁷⁵ All in all, Tcherepnin's educational pentatonic

⁶⁹ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 26.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 27.

⁷² Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 162.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 27.

⁷⁵ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 161.

works demonstrate both his pedagogical desires and his deep interest in and love for Chinese culture.

These three pedagogical sets demonstrate his commitment to both exploring new musical ideas and, given their intent, helping students develop in a way that reflected their own experiences. Tcherepnin did not intend for students to only play music in Chinese styles, but rather to have the ability to learn to play the piano without the additional barrier of learning an unfamiliar tonal system. After growing comfortable with the piano, young pianists could move on to Debussy and other twentieth-century composers, whom Tcherepnin believed students would find “natural” due to the students’ familiarity with “the culture that produced” the works,⁷⁶ and then progress on to more classical European literature.⁷⁷ More importantly, however, Tcherepnin believed that these works “helped teach Chinese and Japanese musician to remain true to their own heritage.”⁷⁸ Thus, Tcherepnin’s enabling his students to learn piano also showed them that the piano could serve their own musical language. Chinese composers could write for it without having to use European harmonic practices, and Chinese pianists could play it without resorting to European or North American music. While these opuses do not appear to have “gained wide-spread usage,” likely due to students’ desires to learn classical European music,⁷⁹ Tcherepnin achieved greater success in his pedagogical goals in his composition competition.

Tcherepnin’s composition competition developed out of his concerns for the compositional styles of young Chinese composers. When Tcherepnin came to China, he found young Chinese composers’ works written for European instruments “disappointing.” Instead of

⁷⁶ Tcherepnin, “Music in Modern China,” 398.

⁷⁷ Chang, “His Influence,” 81.

⁷⁸ Tcherepnin, letter to Grigori Shneerson, May 6, 1965, quoted in Korabelnikova, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 110.

⁷⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 162.

employing their own traditional musical language, “they tended to employ European classical clichés.”⁸⁰ As a result, composers produced works “compromised their originality and naturalness.”⁸¹ This absence of national style seemed “inexplicable”⁸² to the composer who had used his own and others' national styles throughout his career and come to China with the intention of learning and finding new artistic routes from Chinese folk music. In an effort to promote the use of “international instruments to write Chinese national music,” Tcherepnin arranged and provided the cash prize for “a competition...open to any Chinese composer, for a piano piece written originally for piano, but in [a] Chinese idiom.”⁸³

Tcherepnin's composition competition demonstrated his desire to promote the Chinese national style in Chinese music. Tcherepnin organized the competition with the stated goal of “being able to take with [him] a piano piece that will give [him] the opportunity to make known ... Chinese music” “in other countries.”⁸⁴ He proposed the competition to Xiao within the first two months of arriving in China, sending him a letter with some general arrangements on May 21, 1934. In early November, a five-man panel convened to evaluate the works,⁸⁵ consisting of Tcherepnin, Xiao Youmei, Huang Zi, Boris Zakharov, and Aksakov. Tcherepnin himself posted the prize money, 100 Mexican dollars.⁸⁶ The judges unanimously⁸⁷ awarded the prize to He Luting's *Buffalo Boy's Flute*, a two-line contrapuntal piece based on the common image of “a little shepherd boy ... improvising with his little bamboo flute while riding on a buffalo's

⁸⁰ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 123.

⁸¹ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 24.

⁸² Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 123.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Tcherepnin, letter to Xiao Youmei, 21 May, 1934, in Chang, “His Influence,” 59.

⁸⁵ Chang, “His Influence,” 60.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 60; Tcherepnin specifically put up the money in Mexican pesos, as the 1933 “collapse of the international silver market had left China's own money all but worthless”; Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 123.

⁸⁷ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 123.

back.”⁸⁸ Tcherepnin later discussed the work in his article, “Music in Modern China,” describing it as “show[ing] originality, clarity, and a sure hand in counterpoint and form.”⁸⁹ While initially only planning to select one winner, the panel ended up issuing four additional second-place prizes. These went to Lao Zicen’s “Shepherd’s Pastime,” Yu Bianmin’s “Variation in C minor,” Cen Tianhe’s “Prelude,” and Jiang Dingxian’s⁹⁰ “Cradle Song.” An additional honorary second prize went to He Luting’s “Cradle Song.” Tcherepnin provided an additional \$100 to split among the four second-place winners.⁹¹ The most important results of the competition, however, proved to be the nonmaterial ones.

Tcherepnin’s piano competition elevated the status of Chinese music and composers. It “validated”⁹² not only its winners but Chinese composers as a whole, demonstrating that Chinese composers could not only write with their own cultural music but that they could achieve success in so doing. While composers still incorporated European musical elements in their work, “combining Chinese and Western musical languages”⁹³ still meant using Chinese music, moving away from the “European classical clichés”⁹⁴ that had so troubled Tcherepnin. Furthermore, the composers wrote in this combined style on their own, revealing their capability of not only writing in this new style but in creating popular and playable works with it. Perhaps most significantly, the competition raised public opinion of Chinese “national musical forms,” putting them on “a more equal footing with Western classical forms.”⁹⁵ Tcherepnin continued the work

⁸⁸ Chang, “His Influence,” 60.

⁸⁹ Tcherepnin, “Music in Modern China,” 399.

⁹⁰ Called “Jiang Dinxian” in Chang, “His Influence,” 60.

⁹¹ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 124.

⁹² Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 159.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 123.

⁹⁵ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 159.

this competition had begun by not only teaching these students himself but also founding a publishing company to promote their works.

Tcherepnin's decision to found a publishing competition developed out of his time in both Japan and China. The lack of Chinese music in print had struck Tcherepnin when he first got to Shanghai.⁹⁶ During his visit to Japan in the summer of 1934, Tcherepnin had looked for an opportunity to publish the works of several Japanese composers whose music had "particularly impressed him." Japanese publishers, however, wanted instead to focus on printing contemporary European music, as lax copyright regulations made such publishing cheap.⁹⁷ While Tcherepnin had planned to bring these works to European publishers, Chinese printers' lack of interest in printing the winning pieces from the competition helped convince him to found his own publishing house.⁹⁸

Tcherepnin's publishing company *Collection Tcherepnine* promoted the works of his students. Founded in Tokyo,⁹⁹ *Collection Tcherepnine* opened in 1935 and would go on to print pieces from each of Tcherepnin's students.¹⁰⁰ These works included *Buffalo Boy's Flute*, the first piece printed, "other Chinese pieces with piano compositions by Kiyose, Koh, Kobune, Ota, and Matsudaira," and a variety of works by Japanese composers.¹⁰¹ Despite—or perhaps because of—its sizeable catalog, the Tcherepnin Collection served as a purely "altruistic" venture. Funded by Weekes and Tcherepnin, it "never came near to making back [its] costs" and ended up offering no profits to them or the composers. Nevertheless, Tcherepnin managed to have these works published not only in Shanghai and Peiping but in Tokyo, Vienna, Paris, and New

⁹⁶ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 13.

⁹⁷ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 125.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Tcherepnin quoted in Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 125.

¹⁰⁰ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 128.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

York.¹⁰² The presence of their works in print encouraged these composers, whom Tcherepnin would further promote through his concerts around the world.¹⁰³

Tcherepnin's performance career also served to promote Chinese composers. Tcherepnin incorporated winning works from the composition competition into his programs. On his performance tours between 1935 and 1936 "that separated his visits to the Far East," he played piano works from "young Japanese composers on an NBC broadcast in New York and repeated them in recitals and lecture-recitals in some dozen European cities."¹⁰⁴ Back in Asia, he continued to incorporate both Chinese and Japanese music into his program, along with pieces from other Russian composers and some of his own Chinese-inspired works.¹⁰⁵ In so doing, he introduced these composers and their works to a new audience,¹⁰⁶ encouraging them in their compositional pursuits. All of these activities related in one way or another to the Shanghai Conservatory.

Shanghai and the Conservatory

Tcherepnin's time and work in China created a network of peers and students that included key figures in twentieth-century Chinese music. Among his peers he boasted Xiao Youmei, the president of the Shanghai Conservatory, Boris Zakharov, a renowned Russian pianist, and Huang Zi, one of the most famous Chinese song writers of the twentieth century. His students included He Luting, future president of the Shanghai Conservatory, Jiang Wenye, an award-winning composer, and Liu Xuean, also a student of Huang Zi and the century's other great Chinese song writer. Several of his most significant hailed from or lived in Shanghai,

¹⁰² Ibid., 128.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁴ Folkman in Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 24-25.

¹⁰⁵ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 128.

¹⁰⁶ Chang, "His Influence," 92.

where Tcherepnin served as an honored teacher and composer. Of all of these connections, the most important for Tcherepnin likely came in the form of Xiao Youmei.

Xiao Youmei repeatedly promoted Tcherepnin's careers and goals in China. When Tcherepnin planned his composition competition, he wrote to Xiao to ask him to organize the contest and left the choice of judges entirely to Xiao.¹⁰⁷ Xiao agreed to the competition and proposed that Tcherepnin organize the jury, on which both men eventually served.¹⁰⁸ On February 4, 1935, a few month's after the competition, Xiao offered Tcherepnin the role of honorary professor at the conservatory.¹⁰⁹ While Tcherepnin left China soon after,¹¹⁰ he did accept the position and, upon his return to China, taught a number of important Chinese music students in Shanghai and other cities.¹¹¹

Tcherepnin's other connections among music professionals in China divides into foreign and Chinese musicians and educators. The non-Chinese portion included a significant number of Russian nationals who had fled the Russian Revolution. Of these non-native connections, Zakharov played a particularly important role. Among his other duties, Zakharov served as Ming's piano teacher and one of Tcherepnin's hosts at the Conservatory, thus providing a link between the future couple.¹¹² He performed alongside Tcherepnin at Tcherepnin's first concert in China, a performane at the American Women's Club on May 4, 1934, and provided "the recommendation" for Tcherpenin to perform a concert comprised solely of the composer's works

¹⁰⁷ Tcherepnin, letter to Xiao, quoted in Chang, "His Influence," 59.

¹⁰⁸ Chang, "His Influence," 60.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 68; Xiao Youmei, letter to Alexander Tcherepnin, 4 February, 1935, quoted in Chang, "His Influence," 68.

¹¹⁰ Wuellner, "The Complete Piano Music," 88.

¹¹¹ Chang, "His Influence," 68; Xiao Youmei, letter to Alexander Tcherepnin, 4 February, 1935, quoted in Chang, "His Influence," 68.

¹¹² Zakharov, however, seems to have at least accidentally impeded their relationship—when Tcherepnin offered to perform his Second Concerto with the hopes that Ming would play the second piano part as accompaniment, Zakharov insisted on "doing his duty as a host" by playing the part himself; Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 123.

at the Shanghai Conservatory.¹¹³ In addition, Zakharov served as one of the judges of the Chinese piano competition. He also instructed several of Tcherepnin's composition students, including He Luting, albeit briefly, and Jiang Dingxian.¹¹⁴ Other Russian instructors included Serge Aksokov, who served on the jury for Tcherepnin's composition competition, and Boris Lazareff and I. Shevtzoff, both of whom performed on Tcherepnin's May 4th concert.¹¹⁵

Tcherepnin's Chinese peers supported and benefitted from his visit in a variety of ways. Among those who supported him, Cao Anhe, a renowned pipa virtuoso, served as Tcherepnin's pipa instructor during his visit.¹¹⁶ In Beijing, Yang Zhongzi (1885-1962), head of the Beijing University Women's College Music Department, aided Tcherepnin in his studies with Chinese music experts and wrote Chinese program notes for Tcherepnin's "Farewell" concert.¹¹⁷ Huang Zi, "a composer, professor, and dean of studies at the conservatory," aided Tcherepnin's investigation of Chinese folk music.¹¹⁸ As mentioned, Xiao Youmei arranged for Tcherepnin's appointments as both an honorary professor at the Shanghai Conservatory and an advisor to the Chinese Ministry of Education.¹¹⁹

Tcherepnin's Chinese peers benefitted from his visit individually and corporately. Among the individuals benefitted from his visit was Lao Zicen, a professor of piano at the Institute of the Beaux Arts in Beijing who won second place in Tcherepnin's competition with his *Shepherd's Pastime*.¹²⁰ Huang Zi, furthermore, drew compositional inspiration from

¹¹³ Chang, "His Influence," 42.

¹¹⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 131.

¹¹⁵ Chang, "His Influence," 25, 42.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 164-165.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 156; he also taught many of the same students that Tcherepnin did, including He Luting, Liu Xuean, and Jiang Dingxian.

¹¹⁹ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 22.

¹²⁰ Chang, "His Influence," 63.

Tcherepnin, albeit while remaining “more conservative” than Tcherepnin.¹²¹ The Shanghai Conservatory as a whole took advantage Tcherepnin’s “rare combination of skills, prestige, and vision” to develop its curriculum and “gain national and international credibility,” using the composer’s fame and abilities to “establish” itself in the eyes of the rest of the world.¹²²

Tcherepnin had a significant impact on students who would have a major role in the development of contemporary Chinese music. Three particularly important students were He Luting, Jiang Wenye, and Liu Xuean. He Luting, perhaps his most famous student, assumed the role of Minister of Culture of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and took on the position of president of the Shanghai Conservatory in 1958.¹²³ Jiang Wenye served as a professor at the Central Conservatory and composed prolifically.¹²⁴ Liu Xuean went on to become China’s “foremost song writer”¹²⁵ following the death of Huang Zi in 1938.¹²⁶ Jiang Dingxian would serve as vice-president of the Central Conservatory, a role he assumed in 1961,¹²⁷ and chairman of its composition department.¹²⁸ Each of these students personally benefitted from Tcherepnin’s tutelage or example, demonstrating the significance of his two years in China.

He Luting benefitted from Tcherepnin’s association, competition, and performances. First, simply studying with Tcherepnin, a famous composer and performer, brought He Luting musical “prominence” in China.¹²⁹ Second, Tcherepnin’s competition enabled He Luting to study at the Shanghai Conservatory. While he had already attended the school, his financial situation had grown dire enough to force him into “a leave of absence” by the time the

¹²¹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 156.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Chang, “His Influence,” 138.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 132-133.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹²⁷ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 131.

¹²⁸ Chang, “His Influence,” 45.

¹²⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 156.

competition's prizes were awarded.¹³⁰ The money from the competition allowed him to return to the school and continue his education.¹³¹ Third, *Buffalo Boy's Flute*, aided by its association with an elite foreign musician, became the first significant Chinese piano work and He Luting's first major success. It earned its composer "lasting fame"¹³² in China and made him an inspiration to other Chinese composers.¹³³ He Luting would go on to become "one of the most renowned composers and prominent figures in the PRC."¹³⁴ Fourth, the notoriety from the competition improved He Luting's immediate professional prospects. Fifth, *Buffalo Boy's Flute* and Tcherepnin's performance of it promoted He Luting's international reputation. Tcherepnin included the piece in concert programs both in China and abroad. He Luting demonstrated the significance of the work when he later wrote that he missed Tcherepnin "as the composer of *Buffalo Boy's Flute*," not simply as a student or a musician.¹³⁵ He also described Tcherepnin as "the only Western composer who so passionately loved Chinese music[,] ... tireless in his efforts to promote Chinese music around the world."¹³⁶ He Luting's esteem for Tcherepnin reflected the opinions of his peers.

Jiang Wenye benefitted from Tcherepnin's tutelage, publishing house, and performance career. "[B]orn in Japanese-administered Taiwan,"¹³⁷ Jiang studied in Japan, went by his Japanese name, Ko Bunya, and was already a composer and performer by the time he and Tcherepnin met. He and Tcherepnin met in Japan. Tcherepnin, "impressed by Jiang's compositions," "offered ... close guidance on new works,"¹³⁸ which Tcherepnin then

¹³⁰ Chou and Folkman, "Five Biographical Entries," 124.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Schimmelpenninck and Kouwenhoven, "Shanghai Conservatory," 65.

¹³³ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 158.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹³⁵ He Luting quoted in "Intermezzi: Tcherepnin and His Colleagues" in Folkman, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 139.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 166.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

published.¹³⁹ In 1936, Jiang followed Tcherepnin to Beiping “to research Chinese music,” at which point Tcherepnin belatedly realized Jiang’s Chinese identity.¹⁴⁰ Tcherepnin subsequently performed Jiang’s works alongside other Chinese compositions instead of “group[ing him] with Japanese composers.”¹⁴¹ In 1937, Tcherepnin further affirmed Jiang’s Chinese identity by playing Jiang’s Bagatelles, Op. 8, as part of a Chinese national radio broadcast. The broadcast “helped Jiang to focus more on his Chinese heritage” both personally and musically. Musically, Jiang demonstrated Tcherepnin’s ideals for Chinese music by “blending Chinese pentatonicism with Debussyian chord streams, classical Western structures . . . , and polyrhythmic effects,”¹⁴² demonstrating the viability of Tcherepnin’s musical aims.

Tcherepnin primarily impacted Liu through his education, publication, and philosophy. Liu met Tcherepnin in 1934 while studying at the conservatory.¹⁴³ Liu had already studied with Xiao Youmei and with Huang Zi, who viewed Liu as his “favorite student.”¹⁴⁴ In his role as an honorary professor at the conservatory, Tcherepnin provided Liu with “special supervision . . . and helped promote and publish [Liu’s] work internationally.”¹⁴⁵ In 1935, Tcherepnin even mentioned Liu in “Music in Modern China,” Tcherepnin’s article for *The Musical Quarterly* on Chinese music. Liu viewed Tcherepnin as a guide out of China’s past musical “darkness,”¹⁴⁶ a statement Chang explains as Liu’s belief that Tcherepnin had shown Chinese composers “that Chinese music must reflect its native character.”¹⁴⁷ The fact that Liu did use Chinese music for

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Stock, “Jiang Wenye.”

¹⁴³ Chang, “His Influence,” 135.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 134.

¹⁴⁵ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 158.

¹⁴⁶ Liu Xuean, “Tcherepnin is Leaving China,” *Music Education*, Jiangxi, China, vol. 4 (1937): 26, translated by Chang, quoted in and translated by Chang, “His Influence,” 127.

¹⁴⁷ Chang, “His Influence,” 127.

his works at Tcherpnin's motivation lends weight to this argument, with such works as the Prelude to the *Chinese Suite* pulling from Chinese theater.¹⁴⁸ While Liu earned the most recognition for his songs, a contrast from the classically-oriented Tcherpnin, he nonetheless viewed Tcherpnin's lessons as an important element of his work, writing in 1980 that he "[had] never forgotten Mr. Tcherpnin's encouragement and teachings."¹⁴⁹

Tcherpnin chiefly impacted Jiang Dinxian through his performance, competition, and musical philosophy. Jiang first encountered Tcherpnin during the latter's second concert in China in 1934.¹⁵⁰ Jiang later recalled the event to Lee Hsien Ming, writing that "Tcherpnin's works not only affected me deeply but also enlightened me."¹⁵¹ This enlightenment manifested itself more fully after Tcherpnin's competition, in which Jiang received a second-place prize. The contest, especially its contrapuntal winner *Buffalo Boy's Flute*, helped Jiang recognize "the significant issues facing Chinese music": namely, if European and North American musical elements were best-suited to allow "Chinese composers to express traditional idioms."¹⁵² Jiang firmly believed that they were, writing in 1982 that moving "toward[s] harmony and counterpoint" had allowed Chinese composers "to open new ground in the folk style."¹⁵³ His interest in Tcherpnin's works demonstrates the combined influences of Tcherpnin's various efforts.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 135.

¹⁴⁹ Liu Xuean, letter to Chi-Jen Chang, quoted in and translated by Chang, "His Influence," 127.

¹⁵⁰ Chang, "His Influence," 44-45.

¹⁵¹ Jiang Dinxian, letter to Mme. Ming Tcherpnin, 6 June, 1981 quoted in Chang, "His Influence," 45.

¹⁵² Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 158.

¹⁵³ Jiang, "Jinian Qierpin 纪念齐尔品 (Remembering Tcherpnin)," *Zhongyang yinyue xueyuan xuebao* 中央音乐学院学报 (Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music) 4 (1982): 5.

Departure

Tcherepnin left China in 1937, never to return. His initial departure stemmed from both a longing to see Ming¹⁵⁴ and the rising threat of the Sino-Japanese War.¹⁵⁵ In 1936, Tcherepnin witnessed “the tyrannical nature” of Japanese rule in Korea, which “upset” him so much that he called off concerts in Korea and Manchuria and returned directly to Peiping. He then proceeded to perform “a benefit concert for Chinese soldiers” fighting the Japanese.¹⁵⁶ While he remained in China until March 1937, he eventually left in order to both see Ming again and to escape the increasing danger of the impending Sino-Japanese War. While he planned to return to China eventually, “the political turmoil and change of political situation” in the following decades made his hope an impossibility.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

Tcherepnin achieved at least in part all of his goals for his trip to Asia, in spite of his hasty departure. Compositionally, the music and culture he experienced “helped [him] find a new way,”¹⁵⁸ leading to such works *Trepak*, his 1937 ballet which “used Russian folklore in a Chinese manner,”¹⁵⁹ and *The Nymph and the Farmer*, his 1952 opera that draws from “ancient Chinese legend [and] the pentatonic scale.”¹⁶⁰ Pedagogically, he furthered the development of figures such as He Luting and Jiang Wenye. Personally, Tcherepnin established that his marriage to Weekes had flaws besides his affection for Ming, helping lead to his divorce and remarriage less than two years later.¹⁶¹ Perhaps Tcherepnin could have had more influence had

¹⁵⁴ Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 29.

¹⁵⁵ Folkman, editorial footnote in Reich, *Alexander Tcherepnin*, 29 ft 1; Chang, “His Influence,” 125.

¹⁵⁶ Chou and Folkman, “Five Biographical Entries,” 128.

¹⁵⁷ Chang, “His Influence,” 128.

¹⁵⁸ Tcherepnin, “Alexander Tcherepnin,” 17.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁶⁰ Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 85.

¹⁶¹ The exact year for his remarriage varies by author but is considered to have occurred between 1937 and 1938, with Ming herself putting the wedding in 1937; Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 170.

he remained—his parting kept him from exerting any influence as a musical advisor to the Ministry of Education, as he received the appointment in the same year that he left China.¹⁶² The overall successful trips, however, provided a strong legacy for Tcherepnin in the form of his students and peers. The continuation of his legacy, however, would be determined by factors that Tcherepnin could not have foreseen.

¹⁶² Chang, “His Influence,” 94.

Chapter Five: Limiting Factors

Tcherepnin's limited effects in China developed out of a lack of receptiveness to his philosophy and the following decades of political turmoil. Most of Tcherepnin's peers and students did not fully share his view of Chinese music. Tcherepnin believed that Chinese music, like all other folk music, had its own inherently valuable properties. Tcherepnin did view European and North American music as superior to Russian and East Asian music, as demonstrated by his hierarchical ranking of the three in his autobiography. He wrote with European and North American instruments and harmonies, however, because he viewed them not in their national context but as international tools, adaptable to any nation's musical styles. Thus, while the pieces inspired by Chinese culture that he wrote or promoted still drew on European influences and were written for European instruments, his actions are consistent with his writing with Georgian, Egyptian, or even his own Russian folk music and reflect his overall desire to promote Chinese music and composers on the national and international stage. His contemporaries and students, however, did not share so positive a view of Chinese traditional music.

Tcherepnin's peers viewed Chinese traditional music as an inferior form of music that required Westernization. His European contemporaries viewed Chinese traditional music as both technically and culturally inferior to European, with those who taught at the conservatory emphasizing European and North American music in their training. Sergei Aksakov, "the leading Shanghai music critic, theorist, and historian,"¹ a teacher at the Shanghai Conservatory, and a member of the jury for Tcherepnin's composition competition, stands as an excellent example of this mindset. He viewed Chinese musicians "as subjects needing training in Western classical

¹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 35.

music.”² To him, the conservatory represented the first chance for “Chinese students to receive proper education in music theory, aesthetics, and harmony,” despite China’s preexisting musical life.³ Aksakov’s opinions demonstrate the at times condescending attitude of European musicians and instructors in China, an attitude not reflective of Tcherpnin’s own. While manifested differently, however the opinions of Tcherpnin’s Chinese contemporaries and students did not much vary from Aksakov’s.

Tcherpnin’s Chinese contemporaries and students evaluated Chinese music in the context of their political and cultural past and present. In the past, they believed, their national military failures had stemmed from their weakened and underdeveloped culture, which both reflected and partially developed out of their music. For China to establish itself as a strong nation, it had to reform itself—and thus its music—to reflect the global powers that had conquered it. When Tcherpnin visited China, the Japanese occupation and looming threat of the Sino-Japanese further incentivized Westernization, transforming the desired “new compositional style” that “combine[d] Chinese and Western languages” from “a matter of identity or aesthetics” to “a means to national and political survival.”⁴ As political upheaval continued in the next several decades, the purpose of Chinese music and the role of Westernization would play an important role in their personal futures.

Even at the Conservatory, Tcherpnin’s peers did not agree with his assessment of Chinese music. Chao Mei-Pa, a voice instructor at the conservatory, posed that without European musical influences, Chinese music could not obtain “the beauties and strength [that belonged to]

² Ibid., 45.

³ Ibid., 45.

⁴ Ibid., 158.

all Western music.”⁵ Xiao Youmei, while supportive of many of Tcherepnin’s endeavours and the one who nominated Tcherepnin for an advisory position to the Chinese Minister of Education, still believed Chinese music needed reform and operated from that perspective. Huang Zi and other composers of their generation also subscribed to this model of Westernization, due in part to “Western classical music[’s] ... gratifying aesthetic appeal.”⁶ While they respected Tcherepnin, they did not fully agree with him. This stance would be echoed by their students.

Tcherepnin’s students appreciated but did not generally follow Tcherepnin’s example. Students at the conservatory did value Tcherepnin’s “symbolic support” of Chinese music, but viewed traditional Chinese music as “old.”⁷ These young musicians wanted to pursue the “new music” from Europe and North America⁸ and its “cultural capital”⁹ and did so throughout their careers. While at least one of Tcherepnin’s students, Jiang Wenye, investigated Chinese folk music and traditions¹⁰ and seemed to honor at least Tcherepnin’s interest in pentatonicism,¹¹ others focused their attention westwards to Europe. Jiang Dingxian, for example, wrote “variations on Chinese folk songs” in “a simple, diatonic style”¹² that “glossed over” “[t]he particular idiosyncracies of traditional music.”¹³ Although folk music still appeared in his works, Jiang rejected both pentatonicism and the uniqueness of traditional Chinese music, thus rejecting

⁵ Chao Mei-Pa, “The Trend of Modern Chinese Music,” *Tien Hsia Monthly* 4: 1937, 283-284, quoted in Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 163.

⁶ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 163.

⁷ Yang, “Colonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Nationalism,” 390.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹⁰ Chang, “His Influence,” 134.

¹¹ Stock, “Jiang Wenye.”

¹² Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes*, 149n137.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 303.

Tcherepnin's philosophy. The most dramatic denial of Tcherepnin's philosophy, however, came from He Luting.

He Luting demonstrates the lack of enthusiasm for Tcherepnin's musical ideals. Although he had won the composition competition intended to foster composers' appreciation for writing with Chinese music, He Luting went on to chiefly write "Western Romantic harmonizations of Chinese folk and folk-inspired melodies."¹⁴ While he owed his success at least in part to a competition that promoted Chinese musical traditions, He Luting compared "Chinese musical instruments to horse-carts and Western instruments to aircraft to argue for the need of replacing the former with the latter."¹⁵ Eventually, he "earn[ed] a reputation in China as a fervent promoter of Western classical music, seeing it as a means of modernizing Chinese music."¹⁶ He did not completely reject Chinese music, composing with "folksong elements" and "contending that they represented Chinese national essence,"¹⁷ but did not treat Chinese music with the esteem that Tcherepnin did. In so doing, he and most of Tcherepnin's other students demonstrated that they either did not understand or did not agree with his assessment of Chinese music. They still liked and respected Tcherepnin—He Luting, for example, claimed in 1982, "Chinese musicians will forever remember and respect him."¹⁸ Their esteem simply did not carry over to sharing his respect for Chinese folk and traditional music.

Tcherepnin's lack of followers in China played a major role in his lack of long-term influence. While composers used elements of his musical stylings such as pentatonicism, they generally missed the more significant meaning of his labors. This lack of understanding only

¹⁴ Kouwenhoven, "He Luting."

¹⁵ Cheung, "Chinese Music," 207.

¹⁶ Kouwenhoven, "He Luting."

¹⁷ Cheung, "Chinese Music," 207.

¹⁸ He 1982, 1 quoted in Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 164.

worsened in the following decades due to increased political turmoil and violence. These, combined with Tcherepnin's inability to return to China, prevented any potential resurgence in Tcherepnin's ideals. The most important factors came in the form of the Second Civil War (1945-1949), the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Turmoil

The years between Tcherepnin's departure in 1937 and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 diminished the opportunities for Tcherepnin's philosophy to take root in China. In the leadup to Tcherepnin's departure, both China's relationship with Japan and the Chinese Civil War (1927-1937) worsened. The Guomindang and the CCP, two warring sides who had been in conflict since 1927, came to an alliance in 1937 to fight in the Sino-Japanese War. The truce held through the end of the war in 1945, but uneasily. In Shanghai, tensions continued to rise between the two factions even as residents suffered through threats ranging from "internment, restriction, and harassment from the Japanese occupation" to "bombardment and anti-aircraft artillery."¹⁹ The idea of "art for art's sake"²⁰ grew less important in the face of the tension, and composers who were "leftists"—those who favored the Chinese Communist Party and a group that now included He Luting—wrote music to support the war efforts. They believed that "the formula for national salvation" came from simple music that groups could identify, master, and perform together.²¹ Despite victory over Japan, the unity the songs hoped to arouse would not last, as China resumed civil war in 1946. Now called the Chinese Communist

¹⁹ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 192.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

Revolution, the bulk of the conflict concluded in 1949, and the CCP officially founded the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

The CCP's promotion of Westernization directly opposed Tcherepnin's approach. After the founding of the PRC, control of musical developments fell to the CCP. The CCP practiced the Soviet Union's "totalitarian model" of government and made itself felt with "a comprehensive plan" for the future.²² The CCP followed the leadership of Mao Zedong, who claimed that music ought to "serve the people,"²³ not just the elites or academics. To this end, Mao promoted the use of both European instruments and European music in Chinese music which, combined, would likely "create something neither Chinese nor Western, [but] ... still good, just like an ass is neither a horse nor a donkey, but is still good."²⁴ This philosophy, while not favoring European or North American music over Chinese music, nonetheless assumes that Chinese music needs alteration in order to serve the people. This implied Westernization and rejection of at least some of traditional Chinese music demonstrated itself in the CCP's promotion of the zheng, the Chinese 21-string zither.

The CCP's promotion of the zheng demonstrates how they both honored and dismissed the value of traditional Chinese music. To promote the performance of folk music and traditional Chinese instruments like the zheng,²⁵ the Party recruited teachers to provide instruction at universities and had students transcribe folk music the teachers had memorized. In so doing, however, the CCP ignored the oral traditions of zheng instruction and the nature of the works,

²² Han, "Emergence of the Chinese Zheng," 113.

²³ Mao Zedong in McDougall, Bonnie S., *Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art": A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, University of Michigan Press, 1980: 65. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.19066>.

²⁴ Liu Qingzhi, *Zhongguo Xinyinyue Shilun Ji*, Hong Kong, 1990, 24 quoted in and translated by Mei Han, "The *Butterfly Lovers* Violin Concerto: Cultural Interaction Between China and the West in the Twentieth Century," University of British Columbia, 28 February 1998.

²⁵ Mei Han, "Battling the Typhoon: the Zheng's Revolutionary Voice in Maoist China," in *Tyranny and Music*, edited by Joseph E. Morgan and Gregory N. Reish, 125-40 (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2018), 129.

which performers often “extemporize[ed]” from “old melodies from sung poetry and folk tunes.”²⁶ Requiring written, standardized forms of orally transmitted and naturally improvisatory tunes is one of many examples of modernization and Westernization in China under the CCP. Others include an increased number of music schools, such as the Central Conservatory of China, and an influx of instructors from the Soviet Union, who brought with them their conservatory teaching style.²⁷

The CCP’s musical policies and actions in promoting the zheng demonstrate the incompatibility between Tcherepnin’s ideas and China’s actions. As long as China opted for changing their musical traditions instead of using European and North American musical ideas to promote Chinese music, Tcherepnin’s philosophy would not propagate. Several of his students also suffered under the Party’s rule. Jiang Wenye, who had studied composition with Tcherepnin in Japan and followed him to China, joined the faculty of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1950.²⁸ He traced Tcherepnin’s footsteps once more by “turning his attention to Chinese folk traditions” and writing a number of pieces that reflected their influence, including “a set of twelve piano pieces ... and the *Sinfonietta* for strings.”²⁹ Jiang’s happiness would not last, however, and the CCP later persecuted him for his Taiwanese nationality, studies in the “imperial country” of Japan, and closeness with a “white Russian.”³⁰ In 1957, the Party labelled Jiang a “rightist,”³¹ a term used to identify “unruly intellectuals .. as ... enemies of socialism

²⁶ Ibid., 126.

²⁷ Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution*, 45.

²⁸ Jonathan P.J. Stock, "Jiang Wenye," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 12 Mar. 2022, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000049312>.

²⁹ Chang, “His Influence,” 133.

³⁰ “Chiang Wen-yeh, Old-time Traitor to China, Rightist,” *People’s Music* (January 1958): 30, quoted in Chang, “His Influence,” 133.

³¹ Stock, “Jiang Wenye.”

against whom popular criticism could be directed.”³² In consequence, he was “severely restricted” in his teaching and composition, with a complete ban on “broadcasts and performances of his music.”³³ While Tcherepnin’s teachings and Jiang might have eventually gained a foothold, the failing relationship between the Soviet Union and China almost annihilated any opportunities to do so.

The collapse of the Sino-Soviet relationship made any associations between a Chinese musician and a Russian musician dangerous. Immediately following the founding of the PRC, China and the Soviet Union had a generally amicable relationship, called the “Great Friendship.” The Soviets chiefly served as a sort of patron of China, providing information, resources, and support. The Chinese, “eager to acquire and copy ... the industrial and technological achievements of the socialist world,”³⁴ mainly received these gifts with grace.³⁵ However, the Soviets’ abuse of their position and lack of respect for China³⁶ grated, and Chinese complaints and at times unwillingness to develop independently frustrated the Soviets.³⁷ From the fifties on, as China grew in power and influence and the Soviet Union grew more open to the rest of the world, tensions continued to rise.³⁸ The antagonism was not helped by the shifting powers of Central Europe that threatened the Soviet Union’s position³⁹ or China’s undermining behavior in other theaters of the Cold War.⁴⁰ Frustration and a sense of betrayal on both sides blossomed into everything from personal insults to border conflicts “by the late 1960s.”⁴¹ In such a hostile

³² Kraus, *Pianos and Politics*, 88.

³³ Stock, “Jiang Wenye.”

³⁴ Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 214, <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=688327&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 208, 210.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-213.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 222

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 224

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

environment, Tcherepnin's ideas could hardly take root. Even if they could have survived the 1950s, however, the Cultural Revolution put an end to any hope.

The CCP targeted both Liu Xuean and He Luting. While Liu Xuean had enjoyed both a reputation as China's leading song composer and significant popularity in the late 1930s and 1940s, the 1950s saw a change in his fortune. Accused of writing "bourgeois"⁴² music, Liu endured persecution from 1952 to 1957, at which point the Party accused him of writing "non-revolutionary" music and labelled him a rightist.⁴³ They "confined"⁴⁴ his actions and banned his works, only restoring his teaching position at the Chinese Music Institute in Peking over a decade later.⁴⁵ He Luting had a particularly notable case. A member of the CCP since 1926, He Luting had achieved several notable successes, including founding the Yan'an Central Symphony Orchestra in 1946, receiving an appointment to Minister of Culture of the PRC in 1949,⁴⁶ and taking over directing the Shanghai Conservatory in the same year.⁴⁷ His history, however, did not keep him safe, and he faced charges of "not following the 'nationalistic style'"⁴⁸ during the antirightist campaign of 1957.⁴⁹ The worst, however, came seven years later in the form of the Cultural Revolution.

The constant political turmoil following the founding of the People's Republic of China produced both the Cultural Revolution and an atmosphere completely hostile to Tcherepnin's philosophies. As part of his efforts to catch up economically with developed nations like Great Britain and the United States, Mao initiated a four-year economic program in 1958 called the

⁴² Chang, "His Influence," 136.

⁴³ Ibid., 136n1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 134, 136.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁷ Kouwenhoven, "He Luting."

⁴⁸ Xiao Ting and Su Yan, "A Musician of Moral Fortitude, He Luting," *People's Music* (February 1979), 32, quoted in Chang, "His Influence," 138.

⁴⁹ Kraus, *Politics and Pianos*, 104.

Great Leap Forward. Intended to accelerate Chinese economic and industrial development, the program produced a devastating famine by 1959,⁵⁰ deep economic depression by 1960,⁵¹ and millions of deaths within three years.⁵² Mao, fearing a fall from power, tried to maintain his position and expel supposed corruption from the Party by encouraging the Red Guards, youth devotees to China and to Mao, to purge China of foreign or traditional influences.⁵³ In so doing, he set off the ten-year Cultural Revolution, a period of violence and instability from 1966 to 1976 focused on “disparag[ing] the old”⁵⁴ and filled with violence, torture, and death. The revolution especially targeted the middle and upper classes, the educated, the wealthy, and anyone with foreign associations, labelling them as rightists and “anti-revolutionists.” Once again, Tcherepnin’s students did not escape unscathed.

Both He Luting and Jiang Wenye were persecuted during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁵ He Luting, with his “clear preference for European musical models,” made for an easy target, and the Party itself turned him into “a scapegoat” in June 1966 while trying to gain control of the Revolution.⁵⁶ The criticisms levelled at him included his relationship with Tcherepnin and the charge that *Buffalo Boy’s Flute* had idealized the experience of peasants who actually tended water buffaloes.⁵⁷ As part of his punishment, he “was not allowed to communicate with [Tcherepnin]” for the duration of the revolution, a failure of communication He Luting later “count[ed] as one of the great regrets of [He’s] life.”⁵⁸ While He later experienced restoration by

⁵⁰ Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemheuer, *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China’s Great Leap Forward and Famine* (Contemporary Chinese Studies. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 1, 21-22n2.

⁵¹ Thomas Brace, “Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and the Politics of Style,” (PhD diss., the University of Texas at Austin, 1992), 64.

⁵² Estimates for the loss of life vary, with some as high as “30 million deaths and 30 million missing births”; Manning and Wemheuer, *Eating Bitterness*, 1, 21-22n2.

⁵³ Thrasher et al., “China, People’s Republic of,” 31.

⁵⁴ Han, “Emergence of the Chinese Zheng,” 175.

⁵⁵ This author could not find information on Liu Xuean.

⁵⁶ Kraus, *Pianos and Politics*, 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁸ He Luting in Folkman, “Tributes,” 139.

the Party and resumed his work, Jiang Wenye did not receive such mercy. Treated once more as “a target,” Jiang spent “much time” either arrested or performing manual labor on farms,⁵⁹ a common form of punishment or exile for intellectuals. The Party only cleared Jiang of his various charges in 1978, by which point “his health was ruined” and “many of his works” had been destroyed or confiscated.⁶⁰ Jiang died in 1983, composing “little” prior to his passing.⁶¹ With his death, the last and possibly only follower of Tcherepnin in China departed.

After the Cultural Revolution

The years following the Cultural Revolution demonstrated only a slight interest in Tcherepnin’s philosophy. The main element that arose was the reemergence of folk songs and national instruments “ignored or repressed by the radicals of the Cultural Revolution.”⁶² An additional benefit came from the loosening of Party control, with artists allowed to relax from “the rigidly political standards” that dominated during the Revolution.⁶³ Tcherepnin himself eventually emerged in the 1980s as an important figure in the development of contemporary Chinese music, “regularly ... regarded as the foremost foreign influence on Chinese musicians.”⁶⁴ However, these measures did not actually support Tcherepnin’s ideology. With the possible exception of the appearance of folk music, Chinese music continued to focus on Westernization and modernization.

⁵⁹ Stock, “Jiang Wenye.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Kraus, *Pianos and Politics*, 177.

⁶³ Ibid., 178.

⁶⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 202.

Epilogue

Tcherepnin's life and China's history demonstrate why Tcherepnin's philosophy never prospered in China. This is not to say that he did not continue to promote Chinese music after he left China. He continued to perform works by Chinese composers in his concerts in Europe and the United States, introducing works by He Luting, Liu Xuean, and Jiang Wenye to new audiences.¹ He also incorporated Chinese music and culture into his compositions, like 1952's chamber opera *The Nymph and the Farmer* and 1962's *Seven Chinese Folksongs for Voice and Piano*.² He and Ming, for example, supported Chinese musicians living abroad, like composer Ding Shande (1911-1995) and soprano Zhao Xiaoyan (1917-1916). Yang, in fact, credits Tcherepnin with "[bringing Zhao] to the world's attention for the first time."³ After Tcherepnin's death, Ming and the Tcherepnin Society organized a 1977 Chinese cello composition competition along the same lines as Tcherepnin's piano competition in the composer's honor. The winner, Xu Shuya (b. 1961), went on to not only establish himself as "a successful composer" but also to assume the position of president at the Shanghai Conservatory, a title he held from 2009 to 2014.⁴ Despite his work promoting Chinese music abroad, however, Tcherepnin's legacy in China remained censored or repressed up until the late 1970s. He remained "left out entirely" of modern Chinese historical books until the 2000s, only appearing in the 2009 edition⁵ of Wang Yuhe's "authoritative historiography" *Chinese Contemporary Music History*, first published in 1984.⁶ Perhaps the best example of his lack of influence is the very school where he once labored: the Shanghai Conservatory.

¹ Chang, "His Influence," 92.

² Arias, *Alexander Tcherepnin: A Bio-Bibliography*, 19, 139.

³ Yang, "The Shanghai Conservatory," 92.

⁴ Yang, Mikkonen, and Winzenburg, *Networking*, 171.

⁵ Yang, "The Shanghai Conservatory," 95.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

The Shanghai Conservatory's focus on Westernization in musical training and composition demonstrates Tchernin's lack of influence in China. According to Eugénie Grenier Borel's 2019 study, the conservatory presently focuses on training its students to perform European classical music "in a perfectly international way utterly devoid of any national characteristics," "do[ing] its utmost to 'globalise' its Chinese students."⁷ While Borel does state that "[t]he globalization in the training is only partial, and targeted for specific purposes," he does so in reference to the educational environment and repertoire selection. The latter, he says, focuses "only [on] one part of the classical repertoire..., the part that matters for winning a prize in international competition."⁸ The exclusion of certain European musical forms from the conservatory's training, however, does not diminish the fact the conservatory still focuses on producing not Chinese musicians but "soloists capable of winning international competitions." This emphasis chiefly stems from the Chinese Communist Party, which directly controls the conservatory's policies and seeks to gain global recognition for China by producing international competition winners.⁹ Their goal reflects one of Xiao Youmei's initial reasons for making Tchernin an honorary professor at the Shanghai Conservatory: to establish the school's reputation with the international community. The similarity between two scenarios at the very school where Tchernin taught thus demonstrates why his efforts never succeeded: no one had really cared to understand them in the first place.

⁷ Borel, "The Shanghai Conservatory," 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

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