

## **Playing Cosmopolitanism: Programs of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra in the Early Twentieth Century**

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In April 1936, premiere of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Shanghai was given by the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, together with four vocalists and several local choirs. The performance of these 200 musicians of different nationalities exhibited the harmony of settlement's life in this cosmopolitan city, which seemed to be heralded by the repertory of the Municipal Orchestra at the wake of the century. Orchestral works of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky and excerpts from Wagner's music dramas were introduced by the German conductor, Rudolf Buck, during his directorship in 1906-18. Six European musicians also joined the orchestra at that time and made an effort in training the Filipino members, thus provided grounding for its future development into a multinational orchestra. The purpose of this paper is to examine the programs of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra in the early twentieth century by looking into the program notes of 1911/12 Winter season, the only extant program of the orchestra in Buck era. Reception of Beethoven, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky, the most popular composers in the orchestra's programs, will also be studied through the concert reviews and the conductor's reports. An attempt will be made to interpret the association between the orchestra's programs and the city's change in social order and ideology at the turn of the century. Wagner's music foreshadowed the transition to twentieth-century atonality; excerpts from his music dramas sounded as if they announced the breaking of the old social order. The cosmopolitan character of Tchaikovsky's music seemed to foretell the gradual transformation of Shanghai from a semi-colony to a cosmopolitan city. Beethoven's symphonies appeared to disseminate the Western belief that (Western) music is a universal language that transcends beyond temporal and geographic borders, and thus bespoke the harmonious settlement life among residents of different nationalities.