

## **Performance and Culture Consumption in Modern Shanghai from Shun Pao**

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**Abstract:** Shun Pao, a prominent newspaper in contemporary Shanghai, records the social culture in Shanghai in detail, encompassing a wealth of content pertaining to stage art and cultural consumption. Through the transition from a traditional society to the modern era, this newspaper documented the transformations within stage venues, artistic genres, and the cultural consumption associated with performances, thereby capturing its profound significance for Shanghai and the nation as a whole. Amidst the vibrant flourishing of stage art and its consumption, the acceptance of diverse foreign cultures facilitated the preservation and enhancement of traditional performing arts while also expediting the dissemination of novel ideas. This dynamic process fostered societal development and progress.

**Keywords:** Chronicle; Contemporary Shanghai; Artistry in Performance; Cultural Affluence

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Being the most important newspaper in Shanghai for an extensive period, Shun Pao boasted a substantial circulation, rapid delivery of up-to-date information, and significant influence. From the late Qing Dynasty to the pre-liberation era, this newspaper held a paramount position as one of the most influential media platforms, with over 27,000 editions in circulation. It symbolized the advent of modern Chinese journalism, serving as a comprehensive record of the social and cultural fabric of Shanghai (Yuezhi et al., 2003). Furthermore, as an open city, Shanghai was inherently shaped by a diverse amalgamation of local Chinese individuals, networks, and a perpetually changing influx of foreign residents, who collectively contributed to its evolution. From the mid-nineteenth century when the port was first opened, until the 1930s, the expanding city size, booming population, and the continuous construction and enhancement of various entertainment venues all

nurtured the vibrant cultural life and enriched cultural consumption among its inhabitants (Yuan, 1872). The comprehensive archive of *The Declaration* vividly showcases the opulence of stage performances and the vibrant cultural tapestry of the city, characterized by a fusion of Eastern and Western influences across a diverse range of disciplines (Sheng et al., 1872). This amalgamation engendered a flourishing social milieu, replete with a myriad of cultural experiences, contributing significantly to the advancement of cultural consumption. Recognizing the limitations of space in this article, the author intends to delve into both Chinese and foreign stage performances and their associated consumption patterns. Each distinct form of stage art emerges as a testament to its respective era, while also assuming a fundamental role in the preservation and dissemination of culture, thus shouldering a paramount cultural mission.

## 2. STAGE CHANGES IN THE DECLARATION

In the present day, the existence of modern theater is a commonplace phenomenon. However, at the turn of the previous century, it was a novelty not only in Shanghai but throughout the mainland. Nevertheless, when we delve into history, we can trace the origins of traditional Chinese commercial entertainment venues. Starting from the Song Dynasty, numerous literary works, such as "Records of Dreaming in Dong Jing," "Prosperous Records of the Old Man at West Lake," and "Old Tales of the Martial World," vividly depict the bustling scenes of grand and diverse performances, complete with ticketed admission—a truly "modern" practice. With the advent of the Qing Dynasty, teahouses and taverns became prominent, and performances transitioned into secondary elements. Instead of purchasing tickets, patrons were charged using the customary rule of "a bowl of tea for each guest (Ming & Yi, 1910). During the late Qing Dynasty, Shanghai's performance venues specialized in hosting a wide array of opera types. These establishments were frequently advertised in "Shun Pao" and featured reviews of their performances (Lin, 2018). For instance, Sanya Garden, known for its emphasis on Kunqu opera, boasted additional offerings such as theater banquets and wine banquets. This exemplifies the broad business scope of such venues during that era, encompassing tea, wine, banquets, and theater-related activities. Other venues, such as Man Ting Fong, Dan Gui Tea Garden, and Jin Gui Xuan, focused on Peking opera and invited

renowned Peking opera masters like Zhou Chun Kui, Sun Juxian, Tan Xin Pei, and Yang Yue Lou. Concurrently, "The Declaration" published the "Confession of Theatre Programs of Various Theatres," to publicize their repertoire. Notably, Chun Gui Tea Garden took the initiative to hire both Chinese and Western craftsmen to revamp their building, enhancing the traditional theater experience and making it a gem among tea gardens of that time (Cha, 1928). At the onset of the 20th century, the original theaters and tea gardens embarked on improvement, drawing inspiration from Western theaters. A notable example is the New Stage, which, established in 1908, proudly proclaimed itself as the "Newly Built Western-Style Special Improvement Theater in Shiliupu" and offered ticketed performances. Subsequently, other Western-style stages emerged, including the Civilization Stage, New Theater, First Stage of Danguai, and the New Stage, among others. Although Peking Opera remained a prominent feature in these theaters, amusement parks became the hub for a broader range of performances. During that time, various renowned amusement parks such as the Great World, New World, Yong'an Tianyun Building and so on, were frequently advertised in "Shun Pao". These parks were mainly concentrated in bustling areas, with a smaller number dispersed throughout the city, all functioning as commercial enterprises. Furthermore, numerous stages emerged that primarily showcased Western-style performances. One noteworthy example is the Lanxin Theater, capable of hosting music, dance, opera, and other diverse performances. There were also other venues such as the Park Concert Stage, primarily dedicated to hosting concerts, and the General Assembly of the States (Lin, 2012). However, these stages predominantly catered to the entertainment of foreigners in Shanghai, and their access to the wider public was limited for commercial operation (Lin, 2012). From its establishment in 1872 until its discontinuation in 1949, spanning 77 years from the late Qing Dynasty to the founding of the People's Republic of China, the theatrical landscape witnessed significant changes. The traditional tea garden theaters, dominated by Peking Opera, coexisted with amusement parks and improved stages offering a wide range of performances. Additionally, venues patronized by foreigners also played a role. This dynamic growth of the city's population facilitated the proliferation of stage venues, accommodating diverse cultural experiences and fostering a more developed culture of consumption (Luo, 2013).

### 3. DIVERSE TYPES OF STAGE PERFORMANCE ART IN THE DECLARATION

#### 3.1 Stage Performance of Opera Art

Opera art boasts a rich history of development, with music in the Ming and Qing Dynasties being epitomized by Huang Xiangpeng as opera music. Alongside the enduring Kunqu opera, known as a "living fossil," and the quintessential Peking Opera, each region formed local operas with distinct characteristics that held a significant place in people's lives (Su, 1917). In late Qing Dynasty Shanghai, a vibrant array of performances thrived, encompassing Kunqu, Peking Opera, Hui Opera, Yue Opera, Hu Opera, and more. Yuan Zuzhi's work was featured in "Shun Pao", proclaiming, "Dan Gui Yuan and Jin Gui Xuan, singing and singing endlessly from morning to evening." Likewise, Master Shengxi Yanghao wrote, "The foreign fields are everywhere free, and I describe the situation in ink and brush. Large and small theaters open all over the road, and songs and music are like the Lantern Festival every night." [Master Shengxi Yanghao: "Theater Bamboo Words," Declaration, June 4, 11th year of the Tongzhi reign] These accounts illustrate the bustling artistic landscape, where vibrant performances, both in traditional opera's grand and small theaters, as well as in Western-style venues, unfolded ceaselessly day and night. In the 20th century, Peking Opera underwent a transformation, aligning itself more closely with contemporary society. In Shanghai, Peking Opera performances gradually turned towards the Shanghai-style repertoire. "The Remains of the End of the Ming Dynasty" was featured in The Declaration, intending to raise awareness, stating: "Garrisoned drama holds a profound connection with society, and it is for this reason that this stage presents 'Pan Martyrs Throw themselves into the Sea', aiming to caution the populace about the suffering endured by the people (Tao, 1926). It is not the demise of invaders, but the genuine demise of the people... By revisiting scenes from that period, we prevent the present from becoming the future, and we enable the future to understand the past as well." This approach aimed to draw inspiration from historical lessons, transcending the confines of ancient history and the limited scope of traditional opera. Instead, it sought to examine contemporary realities through the lens of the Ming Dynasty's downfall, with the purpose of revitalizing the spirit of the nation's people and safeguarding the nation from peril (Belk & Zhao, 2012). Yue Opera, tracing its origins

back to the latter half of the 19th century, initially emerged as a modest rural opera sung by farmers during the farming time. Over time, it evolved into a local opera that gained popularity beyond its birthplace in Shaoxing through migration. In the bustling city of Shanghai, it garnered acclaim and came to be known as "Duk Ban." Its journey commenced on Beijing Road, with performances held in Guan Qingge dock, and gradually expanded (Gunn, 1980). The spectacle of Yueju Opera captivated audiences, with the demand surging to the extent that "seven Shaoxing theaters were packed every day, continuously presenting captivating performances. Seat prices reached five yuan, and day and night witnessed a constant influx of guests." Eventually, Yueju Opera surpassed even the renowned Peking Opera as the most sought-after theatrical genre of its time. Originating in Shanghai, Hu Opera emerged towards the end of the 19th century, where it initially resonated with the lower classes inhabiting the city streets. The performances primarily revolved around realistic themes, capturing the attention of the locals who referred to it as Hua Gu Opera. With a focus on unveiling the societal turmoil of the era, the opera faced continuous opposition and suppression from establishment figures. It was often condemned as "flower-drum opera" and deemed obscene, leading to the banning of certain artists for their supposed violation of public morality. However, despite these relentless crackdowns, Shanghai Opera's popularity soared due to its accessibility. As the saying goes, "those who attempted to prohibit it only prohibited themselves, while those who performed it expressed their true selves." The opera found its stage in tea gardens and amusement parks, gradually evolving from Flower Drum Opera and ultimately blossoming into the sophisticated Shanghai Opera of "Shenqu." The vibrant essence of Shanghai's opera stage lies in its remarkable diversity and harmonious integration. It serves as a platform where individuals from various social strata can find delight in the captivating performances. While staying true to its traditional roots, the opera transcends boundaries to deliver powerful social critiques, propagating the spirit of the new era. By weaving the future aspirations of the nation into its tapestry, Shanghai Opera takes significant strides towards societal advancement. It stands as a testament to progress, capable of both upholding tradition and contributing to the evolution of the broader populace (Lin, 2018).

### 3.2 Popularity of Foreign Performing Arts

Prior to the opening of the Shanghai port, missionaries played a

pivotal role in introducing Western music to the region. With the port's establishment, the expatriate community flourished and brought forth a myriad of Western entertainment, prominently featuring the enchanting melodies of Western music. This cultural exchange greatly influenced Shanghai's artistic landscape, leaving an indelible mark on its vibrant tapestry of artistic expression. Even today, Shanghai boasts numerous religious edifices that have stood for over a century, such as the venerable Xujiahui Church and church-affiliated schools. Within Xujiahui Church and church-affiliated schools, religious music resonates through the air, encompassing solemn Masses, uplifting hymns, and soul-stirring recitations of scripture. Over time, the reach of music extended beyond purely religious contexts, permeating social life and finding its place in grand festivals, solemn funeral ceremonies, educational settings, and more. Certain musical events catered specifically to Chinese audiences, such as the notable "Xujiahui Concerts," providing an opportunity for everyone, excluding Westerners, to revel in a shared joyous experience. This captivating manifestation of Western musical traditions demonstrates its wide acceptance among the Chinese populace, transcending cultural boundaries with its inherent beauty. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the remarkable evolution of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, tracing its origins back to the esteemed Shanghai Public Band of the Bureau of Public Works. This musical ensemble, renowned as the "preeminent ensemble of the Far East," initially operated under the auspices of the Bureau of Public Works, primarily catering to the entertainment desires of expatriates within the public concessions. However, a significant transformation occurred with the appointment of the visionary Italian maestro, Mei Baiqi. Devoting 23 years of dedicated effort, he implemented numerous reforms, and following the conclusion of World War I, he diligently recruited accomplished musicians from Russia, Italy, Austria, and beyond, bolstering the band's artistic prowess. Subsequently, the orchestra embraced public performances, ensuring that Chinese audiences seeking solace in the enchanting melodies of Western music were equally fulfilled. In the 1930s, a multitude of talented Chinese musicians, including luminaries such as Tan Lizhen and Huang Yijun, joined the orchestra's ranks. These virtuosos showcased their talents through performances of revered compositions like Huang Zi's evocative "Nostalgia," alongside other Chinese-inspired works crafted by foreign composers. In the annals of musical history, records attest to the orchestra's vast repertoire, including open-air concerts,

chamber performances, mesmerizing displays of solo virtuosity, and an astonishing tally of over 400 reported performances solely in the 1920s. Shanghai's proximity to Japan fostered a vibrant exchange of theatrical arts. Among the materials documented in the Declaration, one could find captivating announcements such as the "Toho Song and Dance Troupe of Japan's Celebratory Performances in Commemoration of the Third Anniversary of the Restoration of the National Capital." Moreover, there were enlightening overviews shedding light on the rich tapestry of Japanese music, alongside insightful articles like "Postscript of the Shoujou Tada Opera" and "Listening to the Entrancing Shakuhachi Melodies of the Esteemed Fukuda Clan," which chronicled mesmerizing live performances. During that era, the stage was graced with the artistry of Noh, Kyogen, and the enchanting notes of the Shakuhachi. Shanghai became a cultural hub where diverse expressions flourished, with captivating displays of Noh theater, Kyogen comedic interludes, alluring Japanese dance performances, and a delightful array of musical instruments captivating the audience's senses. Furthermore, it is worth noting the immense popularity of jazz music in Shanghai, with its origins rooted in Europe and America. The article titled "Jazz Music" meticulously documented the intricacies of jazz classes, the establishment of bands, and the diverse performance formats prevalent during that era. Jazz, known for its captivating allure, held considerable commercial appeal. In addition to gracing dance halls, theaters, and various entertainment venues, its influence extended deeply into the realm of local Chinese music. This symbiotic relationship gave birth to a fusion of styles, exemplified by beloved songs of the time such as "Hairy Rain," "Night Shanghai," and "Rose Rose I Love You." These melodies, permeated with a distinct jazz sensibility, embodied the unmistakable essence of the era, leaving behind a lasting testament to its unique characteristics.

#### 4. STAGE ART PERFORMANCE MARKET AND PUBLIC CONSUMPTION IN THE DECLARATION

The "Declaration," being a commercial newspaper, primarily featured advertisements for commercial stage performances. These announcements typically provided details about the venue, content, principal actors, and ticket prices. The publication's existence coincided with the flourishing of Shanghai's modern performance market, where

public appreciation for the arts thrived. A rudimentary classification can be made based on the different types of venues. These encompassed local traditional venues influenced by Western elements, and Western-imported performance spaces. Additionally, venues were categorized based on their target audience, the nature of the content presented, and whether or not admission fees were charged. Such diverse classifications served to cater to the varied tastes and preferences of a discerning audience.

Table 1: The performance venues in Shanghai at Shun Pao

Venues Styles	Local Venues		Improving Venues			Western Style Venues			
Venues	tea garden theaters	Streets	New Style Stage	Playground	theater	Amusement parks	Church	clubs	dance halls
Representative	Sanya Garden		New Stage	Great World	Lanxin Theater	Public Park	Dongjiadu Catholic Church	British Council	Paramount
Business	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open	Private-open	Openv	Private	Open
Performance Content	Kun Opera	Shanghai Opera	Peking Opera	Peking Opera, Civilized Opera, Comic Opera, Monodrama, etc.	Opera Ballet, etc.	Symphony	Hymns Chanting, etc	General	Jazz, Pop songs
Fee	Fee	Free	Fee	Both	Fee	Fee	Free	Membership	Fee

In the dynamic landscape of modern Shanghai, an array of performance venues catered to the diverse population. While a handful of dance halls, clubs, and parks were specifically designed for the expatriate community in the Concession area, the majority of venues welcomed citizens from all walks of life, addressing the varied tastes and social classes of the public. Among the notable establishments were the traditional tea garden theaters, which had been passed down from the late Qing Dynasty. These venues underwent transformation under Western influence, giving rise to improved opera stages that merged elements from both cultures.



Alongside these, amusement parks emerged, showcasing a variety of performances to entertain and delight audiences. Furthermore, comprehensive Western-style performance venues emerged, providing a more inclusive and expansive space for artistic expression. In more unconventional instances, the streets themselves occasionally served as impromptu performance venues, showcasing the ingenuity and adaptability of performers in the city. An abundant array of performance genres were showcased in Shanghai, encompassing both local and international traditions. Native traditional performances, as well as traditional and modern art forms from Europe, America, and Japan, contributed to the vibrant cultural tapestry. Local performances were primarily characterized by opera and vocal performances, with genres such as Kunqu, Hui Opera, and Peking Opera gaining prominence in successive eras. As these genres flourished, more refined and mature forms like Shanghai Opera, Yue Opera, and Comic Opera emerged. Additionally, the repertoire included lighter-hearted performances such as acrobatics and magic, offering entertainment of a different nature. With the increasing presence of expatriates, the influence of Western art became more pronounced. This manifested in the inclusion of religious music, such as chants and hymns, as well as the introduction of jazz, chamber music, and symphony orchestras. Performances from countries like Japan also found their place on the stage. Moreover, under the influence of Western musical traditions, popular music and musical compositions reflecting the spirit of the times came into being. The predominant mode of enjoying these performances was through paid admission, as the venues, content, and cast members varied significantly, resulting in distinct experiences. In the traditional tea gardens, the primary focus was not on charging a specific fee to watch the performances, but rather on offering tea as the main attraction. The layout of the venue typically revolved around square tables resembling café setups, along with elements of traditional theater. The performances served as supplementary entertainment to support the tea garden business. As Liang Shiqiu aptly described in his work "Listening to the Opera," the original purpose of opera gardens was to provide a space for tea-drinking and socializing, with the stage performances being incidental forms of entertainment. This concept is echoed in the preview of the Dangui Xuan (Dangui Tea Garden) performance mentioned in The Declaration: "On the twelfth day of the performance at Dangui Tea Garden, the programs feature the following highlights: 'Tiger Sac Bomb,' 'Wine Golden Bridge,' 'The Great Selling Art,' 'High-five,' 'Playing Dragon Robe,' 'Golden Water Bridge,' 'Rouge Tiger,' 'Take the Tiger of Xie,' and 'Tongtianhe.'" The

Peking Opera repertoire is the main focus, but lacks specific details regarding actors and fees. Following the Western influence on these traditional theaters, they underwent enhancements to transform into stage-oriented venues. Consequently, the performances on the stage took center stage in these improved theaters, accompanied by the establishment of a comparative ticketing system. Evidently, the audience attending these theaters prioritized the performance content and sought out the prominent "actors" gracing the opera stage (Ji & Lin, 2020). Amusement parks function as all-encompassing performance venues, creating a convergence of diverse shows and attractions within a single location, allowing for more flexible pricing structures. Some amusement parks implement a "pass" system, while others have free admission to the venue and charge varying fees for different performances and attractions. For instance, the Great World, as advertised in 1917, stated, "Admission is 20 cents per person, half price for children and servants. Evening sessions conclude at 2 o'clock." Towards the end of the year, "the tour price per person is 20 cents for a small meal, one yuan for a grand feast, and half a yuan for a Chinese meal, including the cost of the tour." [Source: "The Declaration," Dec. 30, 1917]. In these two advertisements, the former elaborates on the diverse range of Chinese and Western amusement programs available day and night. Furthermore, the performances within the same venue are periodically updated, with varying fees corresponding to different amusement programs, and occasionally incorporating the expense of meals (Chan, 2020). Within the realm of Western-style performance venues, theater complexes and concert halls stand out due to their expansive stages, regularly hosting symphony performances. Theaters, functioning as indoor stages, often accommodated symphonies, ballets, operas, and more. During that period, these theaters were referred to as acting theaters. Notably, the Lanxin Theater emerged as a representative establishment, frequently presenting performances by the British expatriate's Aimee Drama Club. For instance, as for the British play "The Sport of Kings" premiered in 1926, the ticket prices for such performances were categorized into four yuan, two yuan, and one yuan, reflecting relatively higher costs compared to other shows (the nearby Tian Tan Theatre charged a maximum ticket price of only one yuan, with regular tickets priced at 2 jiao). Additionally, given the all-English nature of the performance, it becomes apparent that the entry threshold was elevated, making it less suitable for the general public to attend. The Music Stage predominantly served as an open-air park venue, ideal for summer performances. Initially, it was not accessible to the general public but

reserved exclusively for foreign residents to enjoy music. However, following the events of 1928 and the spirit of national resistance, the park was opened to the public. Among the well-known parks of that time, Zhaofeng Park stood out as a prominent venue. On Tuesdays, it hosted regular performances by the Bureau of Public Works band, and it also extended invitations to other bands and performers. Given its spacious capacity, ticket prices for these concerts were usually lower, with seats priced at 2 jiao or 1 jiao, while standing areas were free of charge, catering to a wider audience of mass consumers. Additionally, performances held at church-affiliated schools and churches were open and free to the public. The renowned cabarets and clubs of "Night Shanghai" commanded a higher standard of entry. Initially, these establishments were exclusive, restricted to members from various associations and expatriate-only cabarets. However, as time went on, the Chinese populace established their own cabarets, leading to a rapid rise in popularity. At its zenith, there were over 300 such venues, where the main repertoire consisted of jazz and popular songs of the era. These captivating spaces swiftly became a vital means of social interaction and entertainment for the people of Shanghai.

## 5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF STAGE ART IN MODERN SHANGHAI IN THE DECLARATION

The diverse forms of stage arts and thriving cultural consumption propelled Shanghai into the ranks of the most progressive metropolises of its time. This vibrant atmosphere played a significant role in the rapid advancement of culture and art throughout China, hastening the realization of modernity. In relation to the aspects encompassed by the Declaration, it spurred the establishment of innovative stage structures, the continuous evolution of technology, the ever-expanding repertoire of artistic performances, the cultivation of renowned artistic figures, as well as the emergence and growth of various novel modes of communication. The fusion of traditional scholarly culture, the eclectic civic culture brought by immigrants, and the commercial culture of the modern city seamlessly integrated, leaving a profound imprint on the stage art culture of China as a whole. In the realm of performance venues, a notable shift occurred within a few decades, witnessing the coexistence of traditional tea garden theaters and the introduction of new Western stages to accommodate a diverse range of performances. This expedited the advancement of theater infrastructure. Upon transitioning from the conventional stage to the

enhanced platform for performances, Mei Lanfang, as documented in his work "Forty Years of Stage Life," eloquently remarked, "As I set foot on the unfamiliar stage carpet of this theater, I beheld a new semi-circular stage. In comparison to the old rectangular stage with its customary obstructive pillars hindering the audience's view, this new design exuded brightness and comfort, with abundant favorable conditions." Performing artists warmly embraced the improvements made to the stage, as they provided superior hardware for their craft. Moreover, the enhancement of the stage not only met the requirements of various performance types but also facilitated the adoption of advanced stage technologies, further propelling the potential for modernization within the realm of performance. As reported in the newspapers, the repertoire of arts showcased on the stages of modern Shanghai experienced a remarkable surge. This surge encompassed not only the preservation and refinement of traditional arts but also the introduction of a plethora of artistic forms from abroad, giving rise to a myriad of distinctive Shanghai arts. Notably, Peking, Kun, and Hui operas took turns at the forefront of the artistic scene, fostering advancements and maturation in Yueju and Shanghai operas. Shanghai even earned a reputation as a vibrant hub for Western stage arts, hosting a multitude of performances, thus providing fertile ground for the flourishing of diverse stage arts. The flourishing performing arts scene in Shanghai brought about the rise of numerous celebrated artists. Mei Lanfang, a masterful performer of Peking Opera, established an enduring national and global reputation through his years of captivating performances in Shanghai. In 1913, Mei Lanfang ventured southward, marking his first performance brilliantly advertised in a bi-weekly publication for an impressive duration of 45 consecutive days, starting from November 4. This remarkable feat earned him the esteemed title of "the foremost exponent of the 'Dan' role," generating resounding success. As time progressed, he gradually emerged as an esteemed representative of the Pear Garden, with the 1920s witnessing almost 200 records in "The Declaration" dedicated to his remarkable achievements. Beyond the venerable "stars" of traditional arts, "The Declaration" also chronicled the evolution and widespread popularity of popular music, showcasing notable composers such as Lai Kam Fai, alongside rising stars like Wang Renmei, Zhou Xuan, and Bai Hong, who captivated audiences with their talents. While stage performances focused on the immediate spectacle, the need to satisfy the artistic desires of a much broader population across the vast inland regions called for the utilization of new technologies and media for development and dissemination. "In recent years, China's phonograph

industry has witnessed significant advancement, with the middle-class populace owning a set as almost a standard possession. The prevailing reason for this trend is their desire to immerse themselves in the world of Peking Opera and experience the revival of a bygone era..." This excerpt highlights the profound impact of recorded music on the dissemination and evolution of stage arts. With the prolific production of recordings in Shanghai, spearheaded by pioneering companies like Baidai, a notable milestone as China's first record production company, the public had access to recorded operas, songs, popular music, and patriotic war songs, ushering in a rapid proliferation nationwide and accelerating the progress of society at large.

## 6. SUMMARY

Shun Pao, serving as a paramount publication in modern China, places equal value on the cultivation of refined tastes and the celebration of popular culture. It meticulously documents every facet of social and cultural life in modern Shanghai, exemplifying the city's pivotal role as a vanguard in embracing the outside world and facilitating the nation's transition from feudalism to modernity. In this transformative period of history, the city encapsulated a vibrant tapestry of diverse residents and immigrants, fostering a rich amalgamation of various elements within the realm of stage art. In the cosmopolitan milieu of modern Shanghai, a fascinating juxtaposition unfolded between the indigenous stage arts and a profusion of foreign cultural influences. This intermingling led to the emergence of a fusion between Chinese and Western artistic genres, catering to the diverse preferences of the city's denizens. Consequently, Shanghai ascended as the foremost metropolis in the Far East, imbuing it with a profound influence that continues to resonate in contemporary urban life, firmly establishing itself as a vital chapter in the annals of modern Chinese culture and art. Each distinct form of stage art emerges as a testament to its respective era, while also assuming a fundamental role in the preservation and dissemination of culture, thus shouldering a paramount cultural mission. Within the realm of modern newspaper literature epitomized by "Shun Pao," despite its intricate and multifaceted content, a meticulous excavation of its contents is imperative. By doing so, the significant role of this publication as a chronicle of current events is accentuated, while also providing invaluable references and insights to the scholarly community, transcending the boundaries of time.

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