

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Music Department
香港中文大學音樂系



Tuesday, 17 April, 2007, 2:30 pm

Room G03, Hui Yeung Shing Building

Colloquium

“The Shanghai Conservatory, Chinese Musical Life, and the Russian Diaspora, 1928-1949”

**Neil Edmunds (University of the West of England) and
Hon-Lun Yang (Hong Kong Baptist University)**

All are welcome

Abstract

The National Conservatory of Music (the earliest inclination of the present Shanghai Conservatory of Music), founded in November 1927 by Cai Yuanpei and Xiao Youmei, symbolised the vision of a new Westward-looking China, which was to be liberated from outdated customs and traditions. During the early years of the Conservatory, one of its challenges was staffing issues, and Xiao Youmei did not shy away from hiring musicians of the highest caliber, even though they might not be of Chinese nationality. Shanghai's Russian community with more than 20,000 Russians in the 1930s, in which there were musicians trained at the most prominent Russian conservatories provided a good supply of well trained teachers to the Conservatory. This paper discusses the early history of the Conservatory with a focus on the contributions of the Russian pedagogues such as pianists Boris Zakharov and Sergei Aksakov, cellist Igor Shevtsov, and the vocalist Vladimir Shushlin, to name but a few of the most prominent. By using archival materials from contemporary Chinese and Russian newspapers, the Shanghai Conservatory Library, and the Shanghai Municipal Archive, this paper will assess the role these Russian pedagogues played in the affairs of the Conservatory and the extent to which they influenced the development of Chinese musical life.

Neil Edmunds is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of West of England, Bristol. He is author of *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000) and editor of *Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin: the Baton and Sickle* (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon: 2004). His articles on aspects of twentieth-century musical history have appeared in numerous journals, including *Slavonic and East European Review*, *Contemporary British History*, *Tempo*, and *Muziek en Wetenschap*. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 2003.

Hon-Lun Yang is Associate Professor at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her articles explore subjects of late 19th-century American music and 20th-century Chinese music, which appear in books such as *Socialist Realism and Music: Anti-Modernisms and Avant-gardes* (Praha: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2004); *Music, Power, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), *Music, Meaning and Media* (Helsinki: International Semiotics Institute, 2006) as well as in journals such as *American Music*, *BLOK*, *The Liszt Society Journal*, *CHIME*, etc.