

Cultural Identity within the Chinese Community in Toronto examined through the
Chinese Orchestra – A Study on the Toronto Chinese Orchestra

Kenny Man Hin Kwan

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Supervisor: Michael Coghlan

Graduate Director: Stephanie
Martin

Co-Supervisor / Reader: Casey
Sokol

Date:

Abstract

Ethnic Chinese comprise the second largest visible minority group in Canada, making up 21% of Canada's visible minority population and 4% of its total population (StatsCan 2011). They consistently rank as one of the three largest groups immigrating into Canada. According to the national household survey taken in 2011, over 70% of all Chinese Canadians live in two cities (40.1% in Toronto and 31.1% in Vancouver) (Ibid. 16). Despite their large population and a field of literature on the topic of Chinese Canadians, there is surprisingly little written on their musical activity. Similarly, research on Chinese diasporic music is also limited despite the prevalence of studies on the Chinese diaspora and Chinese music individually. This major research paper will look at the cultural identities in the Chinese community in Toronto through the development of its Chinese orchestral activities. The paper will examine specifically the identity of the Toronto Chinese Orchestra, the longest running Chinese orchestra in Canada and the largest in Ontario.

The paper will comprise of three main sections:

- 1) Overview of the history and development of the modern Chinese orchestra as a vehicle to express cultural identity within the Chinese ethnicity in the twentieth century
- 2) Overview of the history and development of the Chinese orchestra in Toronto in relation to Chinese migration
- 3) Analysis on the cultural identity of Toronto Chinese Orchestra, based on its activities and repertoire

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Motivation.....	1
1.2 Theoretical Framework.....	2
1.3 Literature Overview	5
1.4 A Note on Romanization.....	11
Overview on the Historical and Cultural Background of the Chinese Orchestra	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 1900s to 1949 – Formation and Early Stages of the Chinese Orchestra.....	14
1.3 1949 to 2000s – Diffusion of Chinese Identity	18
1.3a People’s Republic of China.....	18
1.3b Taiwan, Republic of China	24
1.3c Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.....	29
1.4 The Chinese Orchestra in the 21 st century	34
1.5 Conclusion	36
Overview on History and Development of the Chinese Orchestra in Toronto	37
3.1 Introduction.....	37
3.2 Pre-emptive Years (1850s – 1960s).....	38
3.3 Formative Years (1960s-1990s).....	39
3.4 Expansion and diversification (2000s-2010s).....	47
3.5 Current Chinese Orchestras in Toronto	51
Cultural Identity within the Toronto Chinese Orchestra	58
4.1 Introduction.....	58
4.2 Continuity in TCO	58
4.3 Differentiation of TCO	60
Conclusion	63
References	64
Appendix	72
List of Chinese Terms	72

Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

Ethnic Chinese comprise the second largest visible minority group in Canada, making up 21% of Canada's visible minority population and 4% of its total population (Chui, Flanders and Anderson 2013). They consistently rank as one of the three largest groups immigrating into Canada since the late twentieth century. According to the national household survey taken in 2011, over 70% of all Chinese Canadians live in two cities (40.1% in Toronto and 31.1% in Vancouver) (Ibid. 16). Anthony Chan (2013) refers to the Chinese Canadian as akin to a nation "because it has a critical mass of 1.3 million people that began to rise with the influx of Chinese refugees in 1979" (156). Despite their large population and a field of literature on the topic of Chinese Canadians, there is surprisingly little written specifically about their musical activities (Liang 2006). Within the Canada encyclopedia's twenty-six-page entry for Chinese Canadians, only four sentences made mention of Chinese Canadian musical activity, two of which were dedicated to distinguishing specific Chinese Canadian musicians (Chan 2013). Available literatures on Chinese Canadian musical activity are predominantly on its Cantonese opera communities (Li 1990; Huang and Thrasher 1993; Johnson 1996). More broadly, research on Chinese diasporic music also appears to be comparatively limited in the prevalence of studies on Chinese diaspora (Pan 1999, Jeffcoat 2010, 6-7). This is especially peculiar considering the tumultuous changes in Chinese cultural identity over the last century, and consistent influx of Chinese migrants into Canada during most of this period.

This research paper will examine the Chinese cultural identity in Toronto through the lens of its Chinese orchestral community. The modern Chinese orchestra (henceforth "Chinese orchestra") is a large-scale music ensemble developed in the early mid-twentieth century that has

since become a recognized expression of Chinese culture across the Greater China region (Kun 1981; Yang and Saffle 2010, 100). This paper will specifically analyze the cultural identity of the Toronto Chinese Orchestra, the longest running Chinese orchestra in Canada and the largest in Ontario. An overview of the history and development of the Chinese orchestra in the Greater China region and Toronto will precede, and provide context for, this analysis. The overview is not intended as a comprehensive study on the Chinese orchestra but provide an introduction to Chinese orchestral history within the context of Chinese identity. This paper hopes to contribute the perspective of overseas Chinese orchestras to the available literature on Chinese diasporic musical activities.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper follows the ideas of Anthony Seeger's (1987) "musical anthropology" where social life is viewed as a performance composed upon a multitude of cultural and social processes (xiii). Based on this understanding, musical activity is one of many potential vantage points to observe the performance Seeger understands as life. Simon Frith (1996) adopts a similar interpretation towards understanding identity and reasons that this mobile and experiential process is most vividly grasped as music (110-111). The paper holds the premise that the Chinese orchestra serves as a compelling expression of Chinese cultural identity for the Chinese diaspora. Within this premise, the terms "Chinese," "identity," and "diaspora" will be defined below to clarify the scope of this paper.

First, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), *Chinese* as an adjective refers to those "of or pertaining to China," and China as noun is defined as a "country so called, in Asia." Despite the two definitions' seemingly neutral characters, they are in fact complicated by

China's cultural and geopolitical divisions in the twentieth century (Tu 1994; Ho 2013).¹ In addition, Hong Kong develops a divergent "Chinese" identity separate from those in mainland China during their century-long British administration. One attempt to connect these opposing geopolitical/cultural entities comes from political scientist Benedict Anderson (1983), who defines a nation as an "imagined political community" that is "both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). In this conceptualization, shared ideologies provide cohesiveness and continuity to a nation by enabling individuals to locate and contextualize their experiences into a larger community (Anderson 1983; Smith 1991; Ho 2013; Xu 2018). Though the different areas of China developed independent traits, they maintained a stance of cultural subservience to an imaginary China. As such, "Chinese" will be used as a broad identifier for people, ideologies, and traits that originate from the collective geographic area of the People's Republic of China on the mainland, the Republic of China in Taiwan, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereafter referred to as the Greater China region).

In terms of *identity*, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino defines this concept as (2004), "the representation of selected habits foregrounded in given contexts to define self to oneself and to others by oneself and by others" (8). This curated representation is often based on a collective history expressed through cultural activities and symbols constantly undergoing transformation (Hall 1989; Miller 2008). Psychologist Alan Kazdin (2000) surmises three core characteristics of identity: continuity of an individual through time and place, differentiation to distinguish the self from others, and categorization to determine a membership or belonging to specific groups (222-223). As an example, an individual identifying as Chinese implies a continued affinity towards a

¹ Both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the People's Republic of China and the Nationalist Party (KMT) in Taiwan Republic of China continue to claim sovereignty over China, resulting in an ambiguous "One China Policy." This diplomatic situation is also known as the Cross-Strait relations, and foreign powers have taken differing stances towards their recognition and support for either claim.

unique set of qualities associated with the Chinese identity. This identification differentiates and distinguishes the individual from other identifiers despite potential overlaps and similarities in their associated qualities. The association with Chinese also helps categorize and contextualize the individual's experiences and interactions to a larger collective. This paper approaches identity as a set of phenomena (such as places, ideologies, or objects) to which an individual feels a sense of attachment or belonging. These phenomena, whether real or imaginary, inform individuals of their continuity, differentiation, and categorization from others within their social context. The multitude of phenomena nurtures pluralistic unique identities comprised of multiple subsets of associations.

The term *diaspora*, derived from the Greek meaning “to scatter” and initially used to reference the forced dispersion of the Jewish people, has since been broadened to encompass the diffusion of any migrant population that retains a sense of longing for their homeland (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). This dispersion from a “homeland” forms the foundation of the diaspora definition for many scholars, though opinions differ on the specifics surrounding this criterion (Safran 1991; Wang 1993; Clifford 1994; Brubaker 2005; Zheng 2010; S. Chan 2018; Mu and Pang 2019). Although increased international mobility and communication technologies have led to higher interchangeability between the notions of diaspora and transnationalism (Waldinger 2008; Ang 2013; Carnine 2015), scholars have maintained a distinctive emphasis on a collective identity and historical continuity when defining diaspora (Faist 2010; King and Christou 2010). Sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2005) suggests viewing diaspora as a “category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group” (13). Brubaker's view of diaspora as a categorization of practices shares many similarities with this paper's approach to identity and can be understood as viewing diaspora as a subset of phenomena in identity formation. This

interpretation will be supplemented with musicologist Hae-kyung Um's (2005) definition of diaspora as a fluid, complex community formulated and sustained on a triadic relationship between the homeland, transnational community, and the new home (5). In the case of China, this relationship is formulated between the imagined China, the Chinese community, and the community's geographic locations. Changes in this triadic relationship underline the identity of diaspora in both temporal and geographical space as the phenomena that constitute the components of the relationship are continuously negotiated and reconstructed. Fittingly, Chinese diaspora is sometimes referred to as "Chinese residing abroad" (*Huaqiao* 華僑) to signify their eventual return to the homeland.

1.3 Literature Overview

The following literature review examines two broad topics: first, the origins and development of modern Chinese orchestras within the Greater China region, and second, the cultural development in the Toronto Chinese community. Most of the literature on these two topics take one of two perspectives, the first being ethnographic accounts of history and the second being sociopolitical comparative analyses. The history of the modern Chinese orchestra in the Greater China region has been extensively researched but largely restricted to Chinese language writings. English literature emerged in the end of 1970s, beginning with the work of ethnomusicologist Han Kuo-Huang (1979), who introduced and provided a historical account of the ensemble in an article fittingly titled "The Modern Chinese Orchestra." While many of the earlier contributions are historical synopses or introductory observations of the ensemble (Han and Gray 1979; Thrasher 1981; Tsui 2001; Witzleben 2005), deeper analyses of the ensemble's sociocultural values and repertoire in recent Western literature suggests a continuing interest on this topic (Deursen 2008; Jeffcoat 2010; Liu 2010; Lee 2014; Lee 2018).

Although there are few published texts of Chinese musical activities in Toronto and virtually none specifically on its Chinese orchestral community, the Toronto Chinese diasporic culture has been documented through a variety of other perspectives (Li 1978; Lau 1991; Chan 1996; Chan 2001; Chow-Morris 2004; Chan 2011; McGuire 2015; Quah 2018; Wang 2018). Some of these writings, such as Chan's (2001) dissertation on Toronto Chinese festivals, contain records of Toronto Chinese orchestral activity and participants in the periphery of their research. The lack of scholarship on Chinese orchestras in Toronto will be largely supplemented by the writer's personal experiences as an observer-participant in the community and an amalgamation of primary source materials such as concert programs, flyers, and unpublished resources.

Below are four selected English language studies on the Chinese orchestra. These writings not only provide comprehensive accounts of Chinese orchestral development in the English language but also contain helpful research towards understanding overseas Chinese orchestral communities. Han and Gray (1979) provide a background to the Chinese orchestra traced back from historical entertainment orchestras in the Shang dynasty (c.1766-1154 B.C.) and concludes with a survey of Chinese orchestral activity in the United States. Tsui (1990) writes specifically on the development of Chinese orchestras within Hong Kong and notably introduces non-musical factors that may affect the development of a Chinese orchestra community. Jeffcoat (2010) provides a well-rounded literature review on both the topics of Chinese orchestral history and Chinese diasporic music research before comparatively analyzing the activities of two North American Chinese orchestras through a transnational perspective. Lee (2014) examines the changes in the sociocultural identities within the Greater China region through the lens of its professional orchestras and their role and interactions over time, providing a curated insight on each region's perceived associations with the ensemble.

- “The Modern Chinese Orchestra” by Han Kuo-Huang and Judith Gray (1979)

This article is the earliest dated academic writing on the topic of Chinese orchestra in English academia. The author provides an introductory tour of the Chinese orchestra and effectively summarizes the circumstances and practices leading up to its creation until its standardization throughout Greater China region by the 1960s. Additionally, Han provides a preliminary survey of active Chinese orchestras in the United States at the end of the article that is rounded out by a brief commentary on common sociocultural features of these North American Chinese orchestras by Wesleyan university professor Judith Gray. This article is noteworthy for its historical significance and provides a solid introduction into the topic of the modern ensemble.

- *Amateur modernized Chinese orchestras in Hong Kong in the 1970's* by Tsui Ying-fai (1990)

Tsui's thesis documents the origin and development of Chinese orchestral activity in Hong Kong from its amateur scene, providing insight on factors that led its widespread integration. Although his research is supposedly limited to amateur Chinese orchestras unaffiliated with school programs, the pan-participatory behaviors of Hong Kong Chinese orchestral participants provide grounds for his study to be considered a comprehensive outlook on the topic. Tsui's research indicates that orchestral development is largely influenced by non-musical factors such as the age demographic, sociopolitical climate, and economic stability. His observations on the early stages of Chinese orchestral activity in Hong Kong bare many similarities to those in Toronto as the Toronto Chinese diasporic population consisted predominantly of Hong Kong migrants for most of the latter twentieth century. His later contribution to the Chinese orchestra entry in the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music emphasizes Hong Kong as the introductory point for Western avant-garde elements into the modern Chinese orchestra (Tsui 2001). In a

direct connection to the Canadian Chinese community, Tsui was invited by the Toronto Chinese orchestra to perform as a soloist at their inaugural concert in 1993.

- *Negotiating the modern national orchestra on transnational terrains: A comparative study on two modern Chinese orchestras in America* by Kyle Jeffcoat (2010)

Although the core of this thesis is a comparative analysis between the Chinese Music Ensemble of New York (CMENY) and the Chinese Classical Orchestra of the Chinese Music Society of North America (CMSNA), Jeffcoat's account of the Chinese orchestra's history is noteworthy for its inclusion of multiple perspectives and robust literature collection. His literature review exposes a bias in writings on Chinese diasporic culture favoring recognition of literary and performing arts achievements over music and visual arts, and a scarcity in scholarship on the topic of Chinese orchestras outside Asia. The review also suggests that outside of Asia, the adoption of Chinese orchestra by the Chinese community seems to be a unique development only in North America and particular areas of Europe (9). Jeffcoat provides a table of Chinese orchestras in North America from 1980s-2010 as a much-needed update to Han's 1979 list, though it is by no means comprehensive.

- *An analysis of the three modern Chinese orchestras in the context of cultural interaction across Greater China* by Ming-yen Lee (2014)

Ming-yen Lee's dissertation compares a professional Chinese orchestra from each of the three areas within the Greater China region and analyzes their cultural relationships post-1949.² She provides a curated literature review on both the history of Chinese orchestras in the Greater China region and the respective cultural backgrounds of each area. The reception, activities and responsibilities of each orchestra are then compared as representations of the region's identity

² The three professional Chinese orchestras compared in Lee's dissertation are: Shanghai Chinese Orchestra from mainland China, Taipei Chinese Orchestra from Taiwan, and Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra from Hong Kong.

over a phase of three periods: the orchestra's formation and early years during restricted interactions (1949-1986), the onset of permitted cultural exchanges (1987-1996), and the present stage of frequent cultural exchanges (1997 – 2014). Lee's research showcases Chinese orchestral engagement to associations towards both local and overarching phenomena that reinforces the heterogeneity of Chinese cultural identity.

The following four resources shed light on Toronto Chinese diasporic culture and their musical activities that specifically pertains to the Chinese orchestral community. Both Li's (1979) examination of the Toronto Cantonese opera community and Margaret Chan's (2001) studies on Toronto Chinese festival involve Chinese instrumental participants within the scope of its activities. Li and Chan's interactions with these participants, some of whom are also participants or representative figures in the Chinese orchestral community, provide a secondary point of view of Chinese orchestral activities that does not engage the entire Chinese orchestra. Patty Chan (2018) and Badagnani (n.d.) addresses the topic of Chinese orchestras in Toronto in their overview of Chinese orchestras across Canada and North America, respectively.

- *Cantonese opera in Toronto* by Stephen Li (1978)

Li writes about the Cantonese opera community in Toronto from its inception in the 1900s until the late 1970s, largely in the form of a historiography. His status as an active participant provides a semi-ethnographic perspective on the cultural life within the Toronto Chinese community and is one of the earliest literature available on this topic. His involvement with the Chinese Instrumental Music Group of Toronto (CIMGOT) is mentioned but no details on the group's activities were given. In a connection with the Toronto Chinese Orchestra, Li is later featured as a percussionist and soloist in their inaugural concert in 1993.

- *Chinese-Canadian festivals: where memory and imagination converge for diasporic Chinese communities in Toronto* by Margaret Chan (2001)

In her doctoral dissertation, Chan approaches the negotiation of Chinese diasporic identity through the community's interactions with four annual Chinese festivals in Toronto. She provides a historical account of the Chinese Canadian community beginning post-completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway that highlights the community's categorization as both integrally Canadian and a visible minority ethnic group. She particularly underlines the community's growing internal heterogeneity and changing values over the twentieth century (152). Chan also investigates the relationship between various performers and their participation in Toronto Chinese festivals. Her research led her to interview several notable Chinese orchestra participants, such as presiding music director of the Toronto Chinese Music Association (presently known as Toronto Chinese Orchestra) George Gao, alumni member of CIMGOT Ming Wong, and Ho-Deng Chinese ensemble founder Jeanette Teng. Chan categorizes these performers under the broad label of Chinese instrumental music (189, 287).

- "Chinese music in Canada" by Patty Chan (2018)

This lecture was presented as part of Ryerson University's undergraduate course on Chinese music and provides a basic overview of Chinese orchestral activity in Canada from its inception to its latest developments. Chan's research spans across Canada and notes changes in the participant demographics over the years. Her background as a Canadian-born Chinese and long-time participant provides an ethnographic perspective as she explores the challenges of Canadian Chinese orchestras over the years. She ultimately suggests a necessary progression towards a unique Canadian identity but leaves the specifics of this Canadian identity undefined. Despite its preliminary nature, Chan's lecture is invaluable as one of the only resources documenting

Chinese orchestral history in Canada with visual and audio references. Her concurrent position as the presiding artistic director and president of the Toronto Chinese Orchestra at the time of this lecture provides extra context and insight to the state of its community.

- “List of ensembles and musicians playing Chinese music in North America” by David Badagnani (n.d.)

Badagnani maintains an active google document with the intention of listing “all known ensembles and opera troupes performing Chinese music based in North America, past and present.” The list is sorted in alphabetical order by country beginning in Alberta, Canada and ending in Wisconsin, United States. Each entry is supplemented with information on its year of formation, director, active status, and related links where the information is available. Although these records are not always up to date, Badagnani’s list is the most comprehensive catalog of Chinese orchestras in North America available. The list contains records of most Canadian Chinese orchestras.

1.4 A Note on Romanization

Chinese terms will be italicized and Romanized as Mandarin under the *Hanyu Pinyin* (漢語拼音) with traditional Chinese characters in parenthesis at its first appearance where available. Chinese names will be Romanized and written with their surname first, followed by their given name after a space followed by their Chinese characters in parentheses (e.g., Mao Zedong (毛澤東)). In the case where a common English name is available, it will be prioritized and its Mandarin Romanization, along with any common alternative spelling variants, will be provided within the parenthesis before the traditional Chinese characters where available (e.g., Chinese

Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*, WG: *Kuomintang* 國民黨)). A list containing all Chinese terms with their respective Romanizations will be provided at the end of the paper.

Overview on the Historical and Cultural Background of the Chinese Orchestra

2.1 Introduction

The modern Chinese orchestra can be traced to the beginning of the twentieth century as part of a widespread adoption of Western practices into a Chinese framework during China's modernization (Han and Gray 1979; Kun 1981; Tsui 2001). Chinese literati at the turn of century considered China as weak and stagnated in the ways of traditional Chinese culture under the Qing dynasty after humiliating defeats by the British Empire in the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860) and Japanese in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) (Han and Gray 1979; Tsui 2001). They saw Western culture as the necessary next step to modernize China and advocated strongly for a radical adoption of Western ideas. Their beliefs triggered a series of political, cultural, and economic changes that ultimately shaped the Greater China region in the twentieth century.³ Scholars unanimously view the pursuit to incorporate Western practices as the driving force behind the formation of the Chinese orchestra, citing the large symphony orchestra of the late Romantic period as a significant influence (Han and Gray 1979; Tsui 2001; Witzleben 2005; Jeffcoat 2010). According to ethnomusicologist J. Lawrence Witzleben (2005), the development and success of the Chinese orchestra stem from its compatibility with Western models that can make "statements compatible with grand notions of nation and progress" after the collapse of court music traditions necessitated a new musical representative for the nation (156).

³ The advocacy for Western culture triggered the New Culture and May Fourth Movement facilitating an acceptance of foreign ideologies as a guiding point for progress. Ideas of governance such as Republicanism, Communism, and Socialism became prevailing ideologies guiding China to varying results ranging from cultural catastrophes to economic miracles.

Though scholars differ in how they trace the history of the Chinese orchestra, they commonly agree that a large portion of its development was shaped by the Chinese political landscape as a vehicle to represent Chinese identity (Han and Gray 1979; Tsui 1990; 2001; Deursen 2007; Lee 2014). In particular, the establishment of the People's Republic of China and relocation of the Nationalist Party to Taiwan in 1949 is often marked as a period of heightened patriotism which invigorated subsequent political and cultural turmoil (Han and Gray 1979; Thrasher 1981; Tsui 2001; Liu 2010; Lee 2014). This event also instigated a branching in the Chinese cultural identity as the separated parties integrated their new circumstances into their Chinese patriotism. Musicologist Ming-yuen Lee (2014) divides the Chinese culture after 1949 into three groups: Communist, Nationalist, and Colonialist. According to Lee, the cultural traits that developed during their separation remain evident in each region despite their resumed interaction and the convergence of their musical styles by the end of century (3). The Chinese orchestra developed distinctive regional names during this time as well.⁴

This chapter will present the history of Chinese orchestra through a branching model divided into two major sections. The first section will revolve around its inception and early development beginning in the early 1900s until 1949. The second section will cover the period of significant cultural, political, and economical changes experienced by the Chinese from 1949 into the twenty-first century divided into Lee's three branches and focus on the effects of historical events on the Chinese orchestra in relation to its cultural function in the region. The chapter will conclude with a summary of current practices in the Chinese orchestra. This chapter

⁴ The Chinese orchestra is referred to as *minzu yuetuan* (民族樂團) in mainland China, referring to a united ethnicity as the "People's music." Taiwan retains the term *guo yuetuan* (國樂團) where *guo* (國) means "nation" and representing "national music." Hong Kong and Macau adopted *zhong yuetuan* (中樂團), focusing on its culturally Chinese origin (*zhongyue* 中樂) opposed to Western music (*xiyue* 西樂). A fourth variation, *hua yuetuan* (華樂團), is used particularly in Malaysia and Singapore referring to its ethnic Chinese origin (*hua* 華) within the broader context of Asia.

aims to provide an overview of the history and development of the Chinese orchestra in relation to Chinese identity in the Greater China region, offering insight on the perspectives of Chinese diaspora entering Canada towards the ensemble and its purpose.

1.2 1900s to 1949 – Formation and Early Stages of the Chinese Orchestra

The historical account on the creation and early development of the modern Chinese orchestra is largely cohesive among all scholarly sources. Its inspiration came from the ideas of Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) (1868-1940), a leader in the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth movement, who advocated education and the arts as integral pillars for the growth of a society.⁵ He encouraged the integration of Western musical qualities such as harmony to compensate for what was perceived as weaknesses in the heterophonic and often untempered Chinese music at the time (Tsui 2001). As the Chancellor of Peking University, Cai established the Peking Music Society in 1919 and later the National College of Music in Shanghai, offering formal education in traditional Chinese instruments at both institutions. Beijing and Shanghai would serve as the primary areas facilitating the developments that led to the birth of this orchestral ensemble.

In Beijing, Liu Tianhua (劉天華) (1895-1932) pursued modernization during his tenure as a professor at the Peking Music Society by elevating status of the *erhu* (二胡). Originally considered a commoner's instrument, Liu redesigned and expanded the capabilities of the *erhu*

⁵ The May Fourth Movement (*Wu-Si yundong* 五四運動) was a significant anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement that grew out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919. Influenced by the ideas of the New Culture Movement (*Xin Wenhua yundong* 新文化運動), the students protested the Chinese government's weak response to their unfavorable treatment during the Versailles Peace Conference. The protest reached a symbolic success with China's refusal to sign the treaty but remained uninfluential to the treaty itself. The movement brought to attention China's current lack of power under traditional Chinese ideologies and stimulated the pursuit of a new Chinese culture based on Western standards and practices. It also saw the favorable opinions of the Western democracy diminish in favor for Russian Communism due to the perceived negligence from Western democratic powers towards the Chinese during the Versailles Peace Conference. The introduction of vernacular Chinese (*baihua* 白話) during this movement contributed to an upsurge of Chinese nationalism, facilitating the successful reorganization of the Chinese Nationalist Party and the formation of the Chinese Communist Party.

by incorporating compositional, structural, and performance practices of the violin (Tsui 2001; Deursen 2007; Liu 2010). He formed the Institute of the Improvement of Chinese Music (*Guoyue Gaijinshe* 國樂改進社) in 1927 exploring the doubling of instruments in a traditional Jiangnan silk and bamboo ensemble (*Jiangnan sizhu* 江南絲竹), reformation of instruments, and the use of Western notation as a method to advance traditional Chinese music in the context of adopting Western practices. According to Tsui (2001), Liu's alignment with the prevailing trend of Westernization and affiliation with Cai Yuanpei influenced the formation of music clubs and ensembles along the same lines in other cities.

Shanghai underwent an exploration of similar ideas during its rapid development as the site of China's modernism at the turn of the century.⁶ Zheng Jinwen (鄭覲文) (1872-1935) founded the Datong Music Society (*Datong Yuehui* 大同樂會) in Shanghai following the events of the May Fourth movement to advance traditional Chinese music in a Chinese cultural context without becoming subordinate to Western aesthetics and instruments. The Datong Music Society explored folk instrument modification, written notation, and instrumental doubling like Liu, but also expanded the Jiangnan silk and bamboo ensemble into four sections: winds, percussion, plucked strings, and bowed strings. While there are differing views as to whether Liu or Zheng's ensemble form the precursor of the Chinese orchestra, scholars unanimously agree that these experimentations on Jiangnan silk and bamboo ensemble and instrumental reforms form the

⁶ Shanghai at the turn of the twentieth century was an international metropolis due to its occupancy by Western and Japanese powers. Although the capitalist city discriminated against the Chinese in favor for foreigners, its wealth and growth portrayed the potential of integrating foreign ideas. The urbanized city, in stark contrast to the rest of China which was mostly rural and devastated from repeated conflicts, was often seen as a polarizing city being both foreign and native to China (Shih 2001). Cheung (2012) believes that a similar degree of polarity existed musically in Shanghai between reformers who embraced Western music and instrumentation as the embodiment of progress and defenders who sought to adapt Western musical elements into pre-existing Chinese music. She notes that despite their disputes, both sides shared similar opinions on the need to learn from Western models.

nucleus for the Chinese orchestra (Han and Gray 1979; Thrasher 1981; Tsui 2001; Jeffcoat 2010; Lee 2014).

Most scholars consider The Broadcasting Corporation of China Chinese Orchestra (*Zongyang Diantai yinyuezu guoyuedui* 中央電台音樂組國樂隊) to be the first Chinese orchestra (Han and Gray 1979; Thrasher 1981; Tsui 1990; Jeffcoat 2010). Founded in 1935 in Nanjing as a silk and bamboo ensemble playing primarily Guangdong music, the orchestra underwent a series of structural and stylistic changes as they relocated to the wartime capital Chongqing in response to the ensuing Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). These changes drew inspiration primarily from the Western symphony orchestra, introducing concepts like standardized tuning, four-part harmony, low-range instruments, and a conductor. The orchestra dubbed itself as a “national music orchestra” (*guo yuetuan* 國樂團) and its music “national music” (*guoyue* 國樂) to stimulate a national identity. Some scholars believe this orchestra grew out of the need for a pan-Chinese genre of expression that can differentiate the modern China from its previous dynasty (Thrasher 1981; Tsui 2001; Witzleben 2005). Orchestra member Zheng Tisi (1998) outlined ten key points that differentiated the orchestra from all other folk ensembles and musical societies before it (49):

1. First time professional musicians formed a professional national orchestra.
2. Utilized Zhu Zaiyu’s equal temperament in *guoyue* for the first time; added chromatic frets to plucked instruments and chromatic holes to the wind instruments, making it easier to transpose new compositions and expanding the expressiveness of Chinese instrumental music.
3. Made wooden *dahu* (大胡) and *dihu* (低胡) to serialize the national Chinese bowed string instruments.
4. The first-time southern silk and bamboo (江南絲竹) instruments were combined together in ensemble form with the northern wind and percussion instruments.
5. First time a Chinese orchestra hired professional composers to specifically write new *guoyue* compositions.

6. The first time a Chinese orchestra created a professional position for a conductor and assistant conductor within the group. This addition was meant to enhance the organization of rehearsals, broadcasting and performances.
7. The first time classes were offered to train musicians to become professional *guoyue* musicians.
8. The first time 33 professional instrumentalists publicly performed multi-voice compositions with symphonic harmonies.⁷
9. The first time a relatively complete and strict orchestra management system was formulated.
10. For the first time the main purpose of expressing a national spirit was to promote Chinese culture and Chinese instrumental arts together.
(as cited in Jeffcoat 2004, 27)

Although the orchestra disbanded at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949 with some of its members relocating to Taiwan with the Nationalist party, the Communist Party eventually re-established a similar Chinese orchestra in Beijing, recruiting many of the members who remained in China.

Overall, the period of modernization leading up to the Chinese orchestra reflects the changing social circumstances within China, which musicologist Alan Thrasher (1981) ascribes to the depoliticization of the classic literati and the rise of a new middle and intellectual class influenced by Western practices. He describes the effects of this new middle-class on Chinese music as a transition of musical preferences away from Confucianist philosophies of restraint and moral cultivation towards a Western tradition of concert performance and virtuosity (40). Wu (1998) notes a similar popularization of “intellectualized” musicianship based on Western values and practices and a steady decline of traditional Chinese literati and folk musicians (28-29). This shift in musical preferences places the Chinese orchestra as one of the prime

⁷ Han and Gray (1979) divides Chinese orchestral compositions into three major types of playing styles: unison (*qizou* 起奏), ensemble (*hezou* 合奏), and ensembles featuring a solo (*duzou* 獨奏). Unison heterophonic playing was the dominant style for traditional ensembles and early pieces based on traditional tunes. Zheng refers to the orchestra being the first Chinese ensemble to engage in homophonic and polyphonic playing based on Western triadic harmony.

representatives of indigenous Chinese musical traditions in the modernized China, as Thrasher in 1981 indicates that “guoyue is frequently the only [Chinese musical] tradition many of the younger Chinese musicians know” (47).

1.3 1949 to 2000s – Diffusion of Chinese Identity

The year 1949 marked a defining moment in modern Chinese history as the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949) unofficially ended with the Communist Party’s establishment of the People’s Republic of China.⁸ The Nationalist Party and its loyalists relocated to Taiwan with the intention of eventually retaking the mainland as both parties carried out isolationist measures and patriotic propaganda to protect and strengthen their political legitimacy. The division separated ethnic Chinese identifiers from cultural Chinese identifiers as cultural associations became localized by the region’s presiding political ideologies. The political use of art and culture became prevalent during this period as the Chinese orchestra was used prominently to build and showcase national identity for both sides of the Taiwan-Mainland border (Lee 2018). Although developments of the ensemble continue to originate from the mainland, the different circumstances in each region facilitated separate emphases within the scope of their Chinese orchestral activities. Lee’s (2014) distinction between Communist, Nationalist, and Colonialist Chinese thus apply to the mainland, Taiwan, and British-ruled Hong Kong, respectively. The subsections below will explore the history of Chinese orchestral activity in these regions post-1949.

1.3a People’s Republic of China

The People’s Republic of China revolved around the decisions of Mao Zedong (毛澤東) (1893-1976) for the majority of the twentieth century, and the Chinese orchestra was no

⁸ An official peace treaty was never signed between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party after 1949. Though both sides agree on a single sovereignty over the Greater China region, consensus about the ruling party remains unresolved at the point of writing this paper. This is also known as the Cross-Straits relations.

different.⁹ Lee (2018) suggests three stages to the development of the Chinese orchestra during Mao's regime: an initial phase of abundant growth and experimentation, a forced hiatus at the dawn of the Cultural Revolution, and a cautious return under heavy limitations in the latter half of the Cultural Revolution.

Throughout his regime, Mao (1942) believed art to be an essential tool in educating and uniting the people under a political ideology (86). His speech at the 1942 Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (*Yan'an wenyi zuotanhui* 延安文藝座談會), and later his Talk with Music Workers in 1956 (*Tong yinyue gongzuo zhe de tanhua* 同音樂工作者的談話) formed the political guidelines to which artists create their works. These guidelines, despite its ideological commitments to praise the party and the proletarian class, permitted a large degree of creative freedom, as the ideal artist will “learn from the ancients in order to benefit the people of today and learn from foreigners in order to benefit the people of China” (*Gu wei jinyong, yang wei zhongyong* 古為今用、洋為中用) (Mao 1956). The Communist party considered the Chinese orchestra a successful example of this statement due to its synthesis of Western elements with indigenous instruments and supported its propagation across the country along with conservatory institutions for systemized Chinese instrumental education (Witzleben 2005). The use of “national music” (*guoyue*) was replaced in favour for “ethnic music” (*minzu yinyue* 民族音樂) to symbolize the united ethnicities of the proletarian China, and professional orchestras were established by the party to facilitate and showcase its development. Large-scale conferences exploring the creation and modification of instruments for the Chinese orchestra proliferated throughout mainland China, resulting in innovations such as the *paigu* (排鼓) and keyed and

⁹ Mao Zedong was the founder and publicly undisputed leader of the People's Republic of China until his death in 1976. His ideas about the proletarian class and Communism heavily influenced the trajectory of developments in twentieth century China.

bass register *sheng* (笙) (Han and Gray 1979, 18-19; Liu 2010, 338). Lee (2018) notes that the government's relatively relaxed attitude towards musicians during this time allowed an influx of compositions that explore more complex textures and Western triadic harmonies within their works (119). Lee classifies Chinese orchestral repertoire in this period into three categories:

1. Adaptations of ancient works such as “The General’s Command” (*Jiangjun ling* 將軍令) and “Spring Blossoms on a Moonlit River” (*Chunjiang hua yueye* 春江花月夜)
2. Works transplanted from those originally written for Western orchestras such as the “Dance of the Yao People” (*Yaozu wuqu* 瑤族舞曲) and “Spring Festival Overture” (*Chunjie xuqu* 春節序曲)
3. Original compositions either revolutionary or describing the proletarian life such as the “Anti-Japanese War Rhapsody” (*Kangri zhanzheng zhuti kuangxiang* 抗日戰爭主題狂想) and “Fisherman’s Song of the East China Sea” (*Donghai yuge* 東海漁歌)

Notable orchestras founded during this period include the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra (*Shanghai minzu yuetuan* 上海民族樂團) in 1952, the “reformation” of China Broadcasting Chinese orchestra (*Zhongguo Guangbo minzu yuetuan* 中國廣播民族樂團) in 1953, and the Vanguard Chinese Orchestra of the Jinan Military Region (*Jinan Junqu Qianwei minzu yuetuan* 濟南軍區前衛民族樂團) in 1955 that leaned towards the sounds of northern winds and percussion (*chuida* 吹打) music. This period is generally considered the golden years of Chinese orchestral music due to the many innovations and prolific creative outputs experienced by the ensemble (Han and Gray 1979; Lee 2014).

Outside of Mao’s personal ideologies, the Soviet Union was another significant influence on musical development in the early years of the Maoist regime (Mao 1991; Lee 2018). As the “beloved elder brother,” Russian musicians and composers were referred to as the guiding point of the future of China’s music. Politically approved students were sent to Moscow to study the

music of composers such as Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, and the “Russian Five” while many Russians pedagogues were invited to teach at China’s music conservatories (Mao 1991, 108-9). Musicologists Neil Edmunds and Hon-Lun Yang (2012) note the Sino-Soviet interaction as a largely unidirectional relationship from the Russians to the Chinese since the beginning of the twentieth century (93). Deursen (2007) attributes the adoption of modal harmony, heterophonic textures, and expansion in orchestral size to Russian influence (19-20). Lee (2018) finds a number Chinese orchestral repertoire composed during this period to be heavily influenced by Russian folk music, noting how the Soviet Union was undergoing a similar phase of musical nationalism (117). Law and Ho (2011) observe that many of the revolutionary songs supported by the party were Chinese renditions of existing Soviet songs (375).

The Sino-Soviet relationship soured with the death of Stalin and its subsequent de-Stalinization by the new leader Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971). Composer Mao Yu Run (1991) described how China’s “dearest brother [Soviet Union] became a gruesome enemy overnight” as the Communist Party began to tighten its political regulations in fear of having their own Hungarian Revolution.¹⁰ He recounted his realization of this change when he was persecuted in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign (*Fanyou yundong* 反右運動) for participating in the 1956 Hundred Flowers Campaign (*Baihua Qifang* 百花齊放) where citizens were encouraged to speak about their concerns with the governing body (110-11). This political control worsened during the Great Leap Forward (1959-1961) as artists were sent to live and work in rural areas to

¹⁰ The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the Soviet-imposed policies by the government. Encouraged by new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s speech where he attacked the Stalinist regime, a protest against Hungary’s conditions grew into a nationwide revolution that overthrew the Hungarian government before being violently suppressed by the Soviet army. It was considered the first major threat to Soviet control since the end of WWII.

experience and create works that reflect the “proletarian lifestyle.”¹¹ The growing political tensions caused artists such as Mao to become cautious in their endeavours as he reflects that “in order to live safely in our “new society,” I have to keep my mouth sealed tightly” (112).

The political tightening accumulated into the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which put a stop to all Chinese orchestral development in mainland China (Liu 2010, Lee 2014). Mao Zedong called for the “destruction of the four Olds to cultivate for the four News” (*Po siji li sixin* 破四舊立四新), the four being customs, cultures, habits, and ideas to further secure the country under the Maoist ideology (Ho 2006, 349; Lee 2014, 35). The new assessments of culture considered the orchestral ensemble obsolete in favor of the Revolutionary Drama (*Yangban xi* 樣板戲), and many Chinese orchestral musicians were sent to the countryside as laborers.

Chinese orchestral activity partially resumed during the middle period of the Cultural Revolution when the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra was revived in 1972 through the persuasion of conductor-composer Peng Xiuwen (彭修文) (1931-1996) to record Revolutionary pieces through traditional Chinese instruments rather than Western instruments (Lee 2018, 111).¹² The revival of the orchestra allowed a parallel revival of new compositions and arrangements albeit under heavy political restrictions. Pieces composed during this time

¹¹ The Great Leap Forward (*Da Yuejin* 大躍進) was a five-year economic and social campaign launched by the Communist Party that sought to industrialize and transform the country into a communist society. Mao proposed a simultaneous development of agriculture and industrialization utilizing China’s large population to maximize productivity, with the goal to surpass the United Kingdom within fifteen years. Mao’s unrealistic predictions for positive returns led officials to exaggerate their numbers to fulfill and surpass these quotas at the expense of the workers. This, coupled with several natural disasters, resulted in a period of economic regression and an unprecedented number of deaths with which even its low-end estimate surpasses the number of Chinese killed in WWII.

¹² Peng Xiuwen was a celebrated conductor and composer for the Chinese orchestra hailed by some as “the father of Chinese orchestra” for his prolific output during the 1950s to 1960s (Liang 2019).

generally adhere to simple themes and monophonic textures, referencing material from the Revolutionary Dramas (Mao 1991; Lee 2014; 2018).

The Cultural Revolution ended with the Mao's death on October 6, 1976, and many of its policies were immediately revoked by the new leader Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) (1904-1997). Deng softened the extremes of the Maoist ideology and introduced a set of economic reforms known as the "Reform and Opening" (*Gaige Kaifang* 改革開放). He pardoned numerous Chinese persecuted under the Maoist regime in return for their services and permitted open skepticism regarding the results of the Cultural Revolution in his Congratulatory Speech at the Fourth Congress of China Literary and Art Workers (*Zai Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuo zhe disici daibiao dahuishangde zhuci* 在中國文學藝術工作者第四次代表大會上的祝辭) in 1979. Though the state remained heavily controlled by its political body, Deng's new "socialism with Chinese characteristics" encouraged a renewed exploration of the limits of individual expression and stimulated the development of globally recognized Chinese artists (Jing 1991; Deursen 2007; Liu 2010; Kouwenhoven 2015; Wang, Chow and Wong 2019).¹³ Lee (2014) observed the effect of these new freedoms in the increased number of programmatic pieces contrasting with the revolutionary and proletarian songs during Mao's regime, though she noted an underlying adherence to political boundaries in the repertoire (109). She categorized five kinds of performances by the post-Mao-era Shanghai Chinese Orchestra: New Year's and festival music; music appreciation and education through Chinese music; celebration and birthday concerts for the nation and government; tunes originating from the allies and friends of mainland China; and

¹³ Examples of globally recognized Chinese artists include: Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Zhou Long, Chen Yi, and Chen Qigang. These composers are considered part of the "New Wave" and are characterized by the individuality of their works while bridging their experiences with their cultural heritage.

performance invitations from different institutions ranging from private functions to international events.

The twenty-first century saw significant changes in the living standards and values within mainland China as it experienced exponential economic growth along with the advent of technology and globalism. Though the country adapted a degree of diversity in response to these changes, the Communist Party remains the dominant authority over the country's cultural associations, which are currently oriented towards a return to traditional Chinese aesthetics such as Confucianism (Miller 2010; Law and Ho 2011; Kouwenhoven 2015; Xu 2018). The Chinese orchestra is categorized as part of this traditional aesthetic and function as a point of cultural heritage for the Chinese as well as ambassador for traditional Chinese culture abroad (Wang, Chow and Wong 2019). Despite the re-establishment of Chinese orchestras throughout the country and their political approval, the Chinese orchestra community is much less dominant compared to its golden years due to the renewed interest in other minority, court, and folk ensembles, and a general shift in the public preferences towards popular music (Yang and Saffle 2010, 107). As a result, Chinese orchestral activity in mainland China is primarily engaged for specific purposes such as educational and cultural demands, by conservatory-trained or professional musicians.

1.3b Taiwan, Republic of China

Taiwan in the latter half of the twentieth century was heavily intertwined with the choices of the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*, WG: *Kuomintang* 國民黨).¹⁴ When Nationalist Party leader Jiang Jieshi (WG: *Chiang Kai-shek* 蔣介石) (1887-1975) relocated to the island of

¹⁴ Wades-Giles system of Romanization for Mandarin. This system, developed in the mid-nineteenth century, has largely been replaced by the *Hanyu pinyin* system when Romanizing Mandarin but continues to see mixed use in Taiwan especially for historical Taiwanese names and locations.

Taiwan in December 1949 along with the party and its sympathizers, he sought to preserve and protect pre-civil war Chinese traditions in preparation for an eventual return to the mainland. He dismissed the existing Taiwanese culture as a product of Japanese occupation from 1895–1945 and directed a process of Sinicization under strict authoritarian rule.¹⁵ He initiated a Martial Law period that labelled and eliminated perceived opposition and dissent to the party as “bandit” (*fei 匪*) Communist influence, significantly isolating Taiwan from non-party approved associations (Smith 2008).¹⁶ Despite Jiang’s efforts however, Taiwan remain influenced by cultural and political developments outside the island. The most notable example is the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement (*Zhonghua wenhua fuxing yundong* 中華文化復興運動) initiated in 1966, which was launched in response to the effects of the Cultural Revolution (Lai 2018, 8).

The Nationalist Party softened its political control with the ascension of Jiang Jingguo (*WG: Chiang Ching-kuo* 蔣經國) (1910-1988) as president in the 1970s. Despite maintaining an authoritarian regime, Jiang accepted many native-Taiwanese into the party who introduced liberal reforms allowing political and cultural freedom. The reforms guided the eventual end of martial law and authoritarian rule in favor for constitutional democracy, as well as the reconciliation and renewed interest in native Taiwanese culture. Attempts to “desinicize” Taiwan

¹⁵ The Taiwanese are generally divided into the Hokkien (*Fujian* 福建) and the Hakka (*Kejia* 客家). Both are migrant groups originating from the southeast coast of China settling in Taiwan during the Qing dynasty. The gradual assimilation and intermarriage with indigenous Taiwanese led to the development of a hybrid culture separate from China, further augmented later by Japanese imperial colonization. A small indigenous Taiwanese population remain, most having been assimilated into the new Taiwanese culture. The pre-Nationalist Taiwanese spoke primarily in Holo-ue (*Heluo hua* 河洛話), the Taiwanese variant of *Min Nan* dialect (*Minnan hua* 閩南話) (Brown 2004; Phillips 2003).

¹⁶ The island of Taiwan was colonized by Japan at the end of the First Sino-Japan War in 1895 until 1945. The fifty years of Japanese colonization was generally perceived well by the Taiwanese due to the increased standard of living and peaceful integration of Japanese culture into the island. This was set in contrast with the malmanagement and perceived corruption under the Chinese Nationalist Party, leading to unrest upon their return. The unrest erupted into the “228 Incident” (*Er Erba Shijian* 二二八事件) in 1947 and resulted in a period of martial law known as the “White Terror” (*Baise Kongbu* 白色恐怖). The incident is believed to be the catalyst for Taiwan to pursue an independent Taiwanese identity (*Taiwan ren* 台灣人) separate from those from mainland China (*Waixing ren/Dalu ren* 外省人/大陸人) (Smith 2008).

have also emerged since its democratization. Although over 95% of the Taiwanese population are ethnically Han Chinese, an increasing number has identified themselves as solely Taiwanese as opposed to Taiwanese and Chinese or solely Chinese in recent polls (Delvin and Huang 2020). The political relationship between Taiwan and mainland China remains complicated as Taiwan fights to maintain sovereignty under the One China policy while grappling with their identity as an amalgamation of Nationalist Chinese, Japanese colonialist, and indigenous Taiwanese cultures.

The first Chinese orchestra in Taiwan was the Broadcasting Corporation of Taiwan's Chinese orchestra (*Zhongguang guo yuetuan* 中廣國樂團), established by former members of the Chinese Broadcasting Orchestra in Chongqing upon their arrival with the Nationalist party. The orchestra maintained the term "national music" (*guoyue*) to align with the Nationalist vision. Although the martial law banned all interactions with mainland China including music and instruments, a process of redistribution through Hong Kong provided Taiwan with resources and updates concerning the musical developments occurring in mainland China (Lee 2014). To fill the gap in resources left by the martial law, the orchestra began many educational initiatives to cultivate local talent and bolster participants. These initiatives include organizing music competitions and workshops, curating radio programs featuring original compositions and arrangements by Taiwanese composers and establishing a system of professional education for Chinese instruments. Lee suggests that the demand for original Taiwanese arrangements and compositions during this time contributed to the differentiation of Taiwanese identity from the mainland (96-97). The initiatives of the Broadcasting Corporation of Taiwan's Chinese Orchestra inspired the founding of multiple musical societies dedicated to the development and innovation of Chinese orchestral music and integrated Chinese instrumental music education in

Taiwan. Their efforts paved the way for the establishment of the first professional Taiwanese Chinese orchestra in 1979.

The Taipei Chinese orchestra (*Taipei Shili guo yuetuan* 臺北市立國樂團) was established in September 1979 by the Department of Cultural Affairs of Taipei to carry out directives from the president with the goal to maintain pre-revolutionary Chinese culture and provide citizens a high-quality and educated lifestyle through music (Lee 2014, 86). To achieve this objective, the orchestra curated performances in three general categories: concerts aligned with the government's ideology such as political celebrations and diplomatic entertainment, concerts that encourage and promote musical innovation and arrangements, and concerts that commemorate cultural traditions and festivals (91-99). The orchestra also engaged within the community with initiatives ranging from publishing music magazines to running children summer music camps. The initiatives established by Taipei Chinese orchestra not only helped integrate Chinese orchestral music into the daily lives of the public, but also elevated the performance and teaching standards for the orchestral musicians (89). Other professional orchestras were established in subsequent years with similar intentions, such as the National Taiwan Academy of Arts Experimental Chinese Orchestra (*Guoli Yizhuan Shiyuan guo yuetuan* 國立藝專實驗國樂團) in 1984 (now known as the National Chinese Orchestra Taiwan, *Taiwan guo yuetuan* 臺灣國樂團) and the Kaohsiung City Chinese Orchestra (*Gaoxiang Shi guo yuetuan* 高雄市國樂團) in 1989.

The end of martial law period in 1987 enabled Taiwan to have direct musical interaction with mainland China. Though Taiwan was knowledgeable about the musical developments in mainland China through Hong Kong, many Taiwanese musicians embraced the opportunity to experience the music in its birthplace (128). These ensuing cultural exchanges expanded the

repertoire of Chinese orchestras in Taiwan as they gradually adopted compositions from mainland China into their programs. Although concerts highlighting political ideology were still prevalent at the conclusion of the martial law period, the appearance and performance of such compositions decreased substantially over time in favor for concerts showcasing “traditional culture” (122-123). Ironically, certain political based compositions from mainland China such as “Fisherman’s Song of the East China Sea” and “Yellow River Cantata” continue to be performed in Taiwan. Former conductor of National Chinese Orchestra of Taiwan Lin Yuting (林昱廷) (1951-) indicated in an interview with musicologist Lee Ming-yen that “...musicians in Taiwan would try to avoid and remove political meaning, and only focus on the music itself, or avoid explanations for political meaning in music” (143). Lin’s observation embodies the general sentiment adopted towards Chinese orchestral music in Taiwan post-martial law as Lee suggests a changing focus from political associations towards the associations of shared ancestries, historical events, and other phenomena.

The decrease in political affiliation of music in Taiwan propelled the re-emphasis of cultural preservation and artistic innovations in the ensemble. Community engagement and education initiatives became more robust with collaborations with other genres and art forms such as jazz and dance. These collaborations broadened the scope of Chinese orchestral music and facilitated interest and development of both amateur and professional Chinese orchestras. The emphasis on education, preservation, and integration has led Lee (2014) to label Taiwan as a popular haven for researchers interested in Chinese culture (79).

Chinese orchestral music in twenty-first century Taiwan remains aligned with cultural preservation and artistic innovation but enjoys a wide recognition due to its integration within the island’s education and demographic. Although Chinese orchestras in Taiwan retain the term

“national music,” the general absence of political ideology in its consumption allow it to stay relevant in Taiwanese culture despite the complex nature of Taiwanese identity.

1.3c Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is geographic area located along the southern coast of China that was under British administration for most of the twentieth century.¹⁷ This colonial status kept Hong Kong away from the brunt of political turmoil occurring in the mainland as the city developed into an international and modern city earlier than most other parts of Asia. The administration governed Hong Kong as a politically free-thinking zone and did not intentionally interfere with its native Chinese culture and traditions. This freedom allowed Hong Kong to retain an ethnic pride and nostalgia for their “motherland” despite over a century of British rule. However, Hong Kong’s political freedom also allowed the growth of partisan political ideologies that led to several large-scale demonstrations with hazardous levels of activity.¹⁸

The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 saw Hong Kong becoming a haven of refuge for Chinese incompatible with the Maoist regime (Poon 2010, 4). Hong Kong

¹⁷ The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region consists of three areas: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon peninsula, and New Territories: Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain after the first Opium War (1840-1842) under the Treaty of Nanking; A southern portion of Kowloon Peninsula under the First Convention of Peking in 1860 after the second Opium War (1856-1858); New Territories and the rest of Kowloon Peninsula up to the Shenzhen river under the Second Convention of Peking on a 99-year lease to Britain beginning in 1898.

China and Britain entered a series of discussion approaching in 1997 as the 99-year lease was due to expire concerning the region’s future. This resulted in the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 stipulating the return of the Hong Kong territories to Chinese sovereignty under several conditions, notably “One Country Two Systems” administration and the adoption of Basic Law of the HKSAR.

¹⁸ Several large-scale riots took place in Hong Kong in the latter twentieth century, most notably the 1967 Leftist riots. The 1967 leftist riots were a series of large-scale violent riots between pro-communist activists and sympathizers against the British administration. Originating from a minor labor dispute, the tensions were escalated into months of massive strikes and violent demonstrations with acts of murder, bombing, and terrorism. The riots left a lasting impact as many became disillusioned with the violence and disruption caused by the activists. It also necessitated the British administration to search for a differentiating Hong Kong identity away from Communist China, spurring the increase in support for cultural and economic developments in the 1970s and 80s (Choi 1995).

also began its transformation into one of the “Four Asian Dragons” of economy at around the same time due to the influx of workers and rapid industrialization. The resulting political and economic disparity between China and Hong Kong during this period spurred a cultural pluralism in Hong Kong’s identity as an internationalized Chinese region (Chan 1996). This differentiation in identity was further strengthened when mainland Chinese officials ridiculed the idea of Hong Kong opinion in the discussion of Hong Kong’s future during the Sino-British talks (Yeung 2004).

When the Handover of Hong Kong was confirmed in the 1984 Joint Sino-British declaration, the Hong Kong government increased exposure to Chinese culture and introduced civic education to aid the “decolonization” of Hong Kong and ease its transition into the Chinese administration (Ho 2000, 15). However, China’s response to the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests rendered many of these transitional efforts futile.¹⁹ Fearing a similar fate of suppression under Chinese governance, a divergent Hong Kong identity based on social, political, and economic differences was developed as opposed to one with affiliated with the Communist party (Pang and Jiang 2019; Yin and Zhang 2019; Lee 2020). Educational measures introduced to foster positive Hong Kong-mainland relationship and China-centric nationalism garnered little support from these “Hong Kongers” (*Xianggang ren* 香港人) who viewed the measures as indoctrination attempts on their civic identities (Morris and Vickers 2015). An increasing

¹⁹ The Tiananmen Square Protests, commonly known as the June Fourth Incident (*liusi shijian* 六四事件), was a student-led demonstration held in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989. The protesters demanded for democratic reforms such as freedom of speech and press and government accountability in China, with upwards to one million people assembled in the Square at its peak. The protests were forcibly suppressed on June 4, 1989 as China declared martial law and mobilized armed troops to occupy Beijing. Estimates on the death toll and injuries vary from several hundreds to several thousands as both protesters and bystanders were targeted in the gunfire. This topic remains widely censored in China and was a turning point for the limits of political expression in China. Hong Kong citizens closely followed the progress of these demonstrations as a reflection of their potential future under Chinese administration. The suppression of the protests left a lasting impact in Hong Kong’s perception on Chinese sovereignty as many lost trust in the Beijing government. Annual candlelight vigils have been held in Hong Kong since 1989 in memory of the events in Tiananmen Square even after Hong Kong’s Handover in 1997.

number of Hong Kong citizens also sought refuge overseas through emigration and a secondary citizenship, with English-speaking countries such as Canada, United States, and Australia being popular destinations. Despite continued efforts to promote positive Hong Kong-China relations, identifying as a mainland Chinese citizen or as a Hong Kong citizen remain a distinct and conscious choice in Hong Kong (Lee 2020; Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute n.d.). Hong Kong citizens also maintained a sojourning migratory relationship between Asia and the West for economic or social reasons.²⁰

The first recorded Chinese orchestra in Hong Kong was an amateur instrumental ensemble by the name of Phoenix Cantonese Opera Ensemble (*Xianfengming yuejutuan yuedui* 仙鳳鳴粵劇團樂隊) found in 1956 (Lee 2014, 58). This ensemble lasted only a short period due to budgetary problems. Although several more amateur ensembles were established after, Chinese orchestral activity remained relatively dormant in Hong Kong until the 1970s. Tsui (1990) attributed this dormant state to the lack of skilled instrumentalists and interest in pure instrumental ensembles in Hong Kong prior to the 1953, noting that even the established ensembles often consisted of less than twenty players and lacked a conductor (15-17). However, he noted an active effort from ensemble enthusiasts to cultivate interest through instrumental lessons (18-19). Although Chinese orchestral activity was not prevalent in Hong Kong during these two decades, the enthusiasts' efforts to cultivate the scene were integral to its rapid growth and prominence into the 1970s.

The 1970s marked an explosive increase in Chinese orchestral activity. According to Tsui (1990), the emergence of government-run programs in response to Hong Kong's changing

²⁰ Though economic interests have been a motivating factor for the Chinese migration since the eighteenth century, the frequency and strategic variations of these migrations, especially beginning in the latter twentieth century, has led some to classify Chinese migrants, especially Hong Kong citizens, as "global sojourners."

socioeconomic landscape was the primary cause (Tsui 1990, 22). The 1971-1982 MacLehose administration formally recognized Chinese as an official language in Hong Kong and actively encouraged the development of performance arts education through numerous cultural establishments and festivals. Chinese orchestras were often invited to participate in these programs. The establishment of the government-run Music Office (*Yinyue shiwuchu* 音樂事務處) in 1977 further supported the growth and education of Chinese orchestras, notably allocating a public budget to the formation and maintenance of Hong Kong's first professional Chinese orchestra. This government involvement cemented Chinese orchestral activity in Hong Kong as institutions began including options for Chinese instrumental education into their programs (Thrasher 1981, 47). Tsui (1990) also listed Hong Kong's youth-dominant population and economic growth in the 1970s as factors that provided this favorable environment (127,129-130). Lee (2014) cited the increased migration from mainland and heightened appreciation for traditional Chinese culture in opposition to the Cultural Revolution as another factor (58). She also highlighted a gradual adoption of the term "Chinese music" (*zhongyue* 中樂) over "national music" (*guoyue*) and "ethnic music" (*minzu yinyue*) to decrease its political associations while maintaining its Chinese origins (Lee 2018, 103).

Though Chinese orchestras in Hong Kong continued to source musical material from mainland China, the growing divergence in their circumstances developed an appetite for music that could also express these differences. This development of cultural pluralism in Hong Kong's identity can be seen in its only professional Chinese orchestra. Upon its establishment in 1977, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (*Xianggang zhong yuetuan* 香港中樂團) regarded international recognition as one of its major objectives alongside music education and cultivation. It encouraged the appreciation of new music and was the first Chinese orchestra to

commission and invite composers with non-Chinese backgrounds to compose for the Chinese orchestra (Lee 2010, 63). Although many of these commissions shared a similar soundscape with compositions obtained from the mainland, scholars agree that these commissions were also the catalysts that introduced Western avant-garde ideas into the Chinese orchestra (Han and Gray 1979; Tsui 2001; Lee 2010). Lee (2010) believes that this “spirit of innovation and forward movement” form the foundation of Hong Kong’s new cultural identity (65).

The wave of emigration in the late 1980s until the early 1990s and heightened political consciousness stemming from uncertainties towards Hong Kong’s eminent Handover and the Tiananmen Square Protests did little to faze Chinese orchestral activity in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra maintained its role as a cultural ambassador for Hong Kong with the additional responsibilities to celebrate and facilitate the region’s return to the mainland. Lee (2010) indicated that though it was rare to hear mainland compositions in the programs of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra prior to 1987, it became rare for their concerts to not contain at least one composition from China after the confirmation of Hong Kong’s Handover. She also noted an increase in politically commissioned concerts as Hong Kong approached 1997 to celebrate its return to Chinese governance (118). Some emigrants reconnected overseas through their Chinese orchestral associations and propagated Chinese orchestral activity into their new environment.

Chinese orchestral activity in the twenty-first century Hong Kong maintains its emphasis towards cultivating cultural appreciation, innovation, and international recognition for Chinese instruments. Despite Hong Kong’s high rate of migration causing a continuous fluctuation in Chinese orchestral participants, the Chinese orchestra remains prevalent as a proficient community-building tool. The communities developed within Chinese orchestral activities serve

to connect members and alumni from various backgrounds and circumstances locally and globally. These individualized communities within Chinese orchestras allow Chinese orchestral activity to remain largely unscathed in Hong Kong’s struggles with changing sociopolitical values since its return to Chinese governance.

1.4 The Chinese Orchestra in the 21st century

Experimentation on the instrumentation for the Chinese orchestra has largely been stabilized by the late 1980s (Wang, Chow and Wong 2019). The orchestra maintains the four families of wind, percussion, bowed string, and plucked string instruments positioned in a fan-like shape around a conductor. The size of a Chinese orchestra can range from a dozen players to upwards to a hundred depending on the group and circumstances, though preference for a large orchestra is prevalent. Below is a table of instruments expected within a standard Chinese orchestra:

Table 1: Instruments of the modern Chinese Orchestra

Section	Instruments
Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Di</i> 笛 (Flute with membrane) - <i>Sheng</i> 笙 (Mouth organ; soprano, alto, tenor, bass variants) - <i>Suona</i> 嗩呐 (Shawm; soprano, alto, tenor and bass variants) - <i>Guan</i> 管 (Reed pipe; soprano, alto, bass, and contrabass variants)
Percussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Gu</i> 鼓 (Various drums) - <i>Bo</i> 鈸 (Various cymbals) - <i>Luo</i> 鑼 (Various gongs) - <i>Muyu</i> 木魚 (Wood blocks) - Timpani and other Western percussion instruments
Plucked Strings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Liuqin</i> 柳琴 (Pear-shaped mandolin) - <i>Pipa</i> 琵琶 (Fretless long-necked lute) - <i>Yangqin</i> 揚琴 (Hammered dulcimer) - <i>Zhongruan</i> 中阮 (Round tenor lute) - <i>Daruan</i> 大阮 (Round bass lute) - <i>Sanxian</i> 三弦 (3-stringed long-necked lute) - <i>Zheng</i> 箏 (21-stringed zither)

Bowed Strings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Gaohu</i> 高胡 (High-pitched fiddle) - <i>Erhu</i> 二胡 (two stringed Fiddle) - <i>Zhonghu</i> 中胡 (Mid-pitched fiddle) - <i>Gehu</i> 革胡 (4 stringed low-pitched fiddle usually substituted by the Western cello) - <i>Diyin-Gehu</i> 低音革胡 (4 stringed bass fiddle usually substituted by the Western contrabass)
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Source: Wang, Chow and Wong 2019, xxxviii

In orchestras where specific wind and plucked string instruments may be unavailable, parts are played based on availability or adapted to available instruments rather than strict part-writing. This practice is prevalent especially in amateur orchestras. Music is most commonly notated using a solfege-based number cipher notation (*jianpu* 簡譜), but music written in Western staff notation is also used (Deursen 2007).

Though instrumentation has been standardized, seating and orchestration practices remain open to experimentation due to differing views on the orchestra’s timbral balance.²¹ Lee (2014) observes different seating formations between professional Chinese orchestras across the Greater China region, and suggests these changes are informed by what the orchestra characterizes as the “main sound of the Chinese orchestra” (129). These modifications usually occur between the bowed and plucked strings division while winds and percussions remain unaffected at the back of the orchestra. Some musicologists have also noted a gradual altering and phasing out of Chinese instruments with “strong individualistic timbres” within the Chinese orchestra to achieve more “neutral” and uniform timbres (Jeffcoat 2010; Lee 2014; Chua 2015). They

²¹ Chinese instruments of the same family rarely needed to play in unison in an ensemble setting prior to the Chinese orchestra. Chua (2015) notes how ancient Chinese court music valued composite timbres comprised of several qualities different from the uniform timbre often sought after in the Western orchestral setting. Winzenburg (2017) describes an “insider-outsider” narrative regarding timbral qualities in the orchestral setting, noting the prevalent use of outsider terminology on the timbral qualities of instruments excluded from the orchestra. He observes that many of these outsider qualities are also used to describe the timbral qualities of Chinese instruments.

attribute this trend to changing tonal preferences and is generally viewed as a rapid softening or devolution of the “Chinese” character of the ensemble (Jeffcoat 2010; Chua 2015).

1.5 Conclusion

The Chinese orchestra has become a recognized cultural representative of Chinese culture across the Greater China region over the twentieth century. Despite having much of its origins and development fueled by Western influences, the ensemble is accepted as a product of traditional Chinese culture (Kun 1981; Thrasher 1981; Lee 2014). Its compatibility with political agendas propelled the Chinese orchestra to flourish as a cultural symbol of China by the mid-twentieth century. However, the division of Chinese culture post-1949 also imposed variances into its cultural functions. Chinese orchestras in mainland China, despite being the center of most developments and resources, had to maintain vigilant and subservient to presiding political ideologies. On the other hand, Taiwan deemphasized political associations in favor of cultural preservation and artistic innovation through community initiatives and education. Hong Kong observed both political and creative demands and utilized the Chinese orchestra’s social capabilities to facilitate community building. These variances consequently shape the regional attitude towards the ensemble and its activities. However, these variances do not affect the Chinese orchestra’s representation of ethnic Chinese heritage and leverages Chinese orchestral activity as an intermediary point between Chinese citizens regardless of cultural and sociopolitical differences. As such, participation in a Chinese orchestra has become both a point of entry for Chinese diaspora to integrate themselves into their new environment as well as a connection to their homeland.

Overview on History and Development of the Chinese Orchestra in Toronto

3.1 Introduction

While there are records of Chinese residing in Canada as early as 1788, there are few records of Chinese cultural activity in Canada and virtually none for Toronto prior to the twentieth century. The lack of records, however, does not mean the Chinese residents had assimilated into Canadian culture. Although Chinese diaspora up until the implementation of the 1967 point-system immigration typically had little financial freedom to dedicate to cultural activities, racial discrimination also severely limited their ability to assimilate and instead enforced a self-regulated cultural autonomy. Despite Canada's adoption of multiculturalism in 1971 and the rising economic mobility of China bridging some of these issues, ethnomusicologist Margaret Chan (2001) portrays the Chinese in Canada as continuing to experience a binary identity where they must constantly negotiate between being a minority "other" and an integral Canadian (152). This negotiation is further complicated by the fluidity of Chinese migration as they traverse to and from Canada and Asia. This chapter will examine the history and development of the Chinese orchestra in Toronto as a representation of this negotiation of Chinese cultural identity. The chapter will divide the ensemble's history into three phases: first, the pre-emptive years leading up to the implementation of the point-immigration system in which the Chinese orchestra was not present in Toronto; second, the formative years of the Chinese orchestra when Toronto experienced a surge in migration after 1967, particularly from Hong Kong; and finally, the years of expansion and diversification in the twenty-first century when mainland China became the primary source of Chinese migration. The influence of immigration on local Chinese orchestral activity will be discussed in each phase, followed by an observation of currently active Chinese orchestras in Toronto. Due to the fluid nature of Chinese

migration and the practiced independent associations between their geographic and ethnic cultural identity, the Chinese diaspora will be referred to under the umbrella term of migrants in this chapter.

3.2 Pre-emptive Years (1850s – 1960s)

According to the Canadian Historical Association, Chinese migration to Canada began in the eighteenth century as part of “a great overseas diaspora that resulted from the convergence of two major historical forces: a rural crisis in China and Western imperialism” (Tan and Roy 1985, 3). Specifically, Chinese migrants saw Canada as a land of opportunity to provide steady income for their families while Caucasian Canadians saw the Chinese as an exploitable source of cheap labor for their industrialization (4). This uneven relationship gave way to discriminatory laws and social pressures meant to dissuade Chinese from entering and settling in Canada after labor-intensive projects such as the Canadian-Pacific railway were completed; Chinese inhabitants were perceived as a “Yellow Peril” by the Canadian government and were deprived of citizenship rights until after World War II, when opinions on racial prejudice became more contested.²² To survive in this hostile environment, Chinese migrants assembled “Chinatown” communities that were internally regulated through benevolent associations and fraternal societies (Guo and Guo 2011). During this period, the Chinese community in Canada consisted primarily of working-class Cantonese migrants, especially those from the *Sanyi* (三邑) and *Siyi* (四邑) regions of southern Guangdong. The earliest record of Chinese community in Toronto was a laundry business established in 1877 (Chan 2001, 153-159).

²² This xenophobic attitude was enforced at all levels from anti-Asian riots to the federal government who deemed Asians as “unfit for full citizenship” and “obnoxious to a free community and dangerous to the state” (Chan 2019). The most notable examples of this discrimination were the fifty-dollar head tax for Chinese migrants beginning in 1885 that incrementally increased to a staggering five-hundred dollars by 1903 and the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 that virtually suspended the immigration of ethnic Chinese, including those with British nationality.

Records of musical activity within the Chinese Canadian community during this period are scarce due to the community's emphasis on economic security over cultural activities and entertainment. The Canadian Encyclopedia classifies four categories of musical activity amongst the Chinese Canadian community: folk-street-work songs, Cantonese operas, Cantonese ensembles, and non-Cantonese traditional music (Liang 2006). Of these activities, Cantonese opera was the most prevalent and was supported by benevolent and fraternal societies in the form of musical clubs. According to ethnomusicologist Stephen Li (1987), these clubs were founded primarily as fundraisers for political causes in mainland China. However, they were eventually put on hiatus by 1942 due to their inability to sustain overhead costs, leaving a gap of twenty-six years (until 1969) where musical activities were "confined to casual singing and instrumental performances during festivities" (30-41). Despite their growth and rising popularity in China since the early twentieth century, ensembles resembling the modern Chinese orchestra did not exist in Toronto until the 1970s. The political instability within China during the early twentieth century, discriminatory laws limiting migration, and lack of financial freedom amongst migrants in the hostile Canadian environment may have been factors contributing to this absence. Diasporic musical activities within the Chinese community remained infrequent up until the mid-1960s and were used primarily to evoke memories of homeland during important festivals. Non-Chinese Canadians generally did not associate with the Toronto Chinese community, reflecting a prevailing mentality during this period where "Chinese were respectfully embraced in Toronto in the forms of antiquities but were barely tolerated in a living human form" (Chan 2001, 156).

3.3 Formative Years (1960s-1990s)

Canada's implementation of a point-immigration system in 1967 marked a turning point for the Chinese community, as it began a period of sustained migration (Ng 2006, 234). Scholars

unanimously note the system's impact in equalizing immigration access for Chinese, observing a significant increase and change in the demographic towards the educated middle-class predominantly from Hong Kong (Tan and Roy 1985; Li 1987; Chan 2001; Guo and DeVoretz 2007). Chan suggests that these new migrants from Hong Kong introduced a stamp of "internationality" in the Chinese community as they looked towards promoting Chinese culture and integrating it into Canadian society rather than merely preserving it as older generations had done. These Hong Kong migrants rebranded Chinatowns as government-approved tourist locations, preferred to reside in suburban areas (such as Scarborough, Richmond Hill, and Markham in the Greater Toronto Area), and depended considerably less on long-standing fraternal and benevolent associations as intermediaries between themselves and civic officials (Tan and Roy 1985; Chan 2001; Salaff and Chan 2007).²³ Toronto experienced two significant waves of immigration from Hong Kong during this period: one at the onset of the point-system immigration, and the second between 1989 until 1994 due to the unease towards the Handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997.²⁴ It is also important to mention Canada's establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China beginning in 1970 expanded the opportunities of migration from mainland China, although migration from the mainland

²³ It is notable that a new generation of Canadian-born Chinese also became increasingly involved in local politics and induced a push for higher cultural flexibility in the Chinese community during this time. The growing diversification in the circumstances and values within the Chinese community, however, did not prevent them from uniting against exterior adversaries as seen in the W5 controversy, where a xenophobic TV program segment named "Campus Giveaway" falsely identified Chinese Canadian students as foreigners and accused them of taking education opportunities from Canadian students. This structure of heterogeneity with a united front would become a consistent feature of the Toronto Chinese community.

²⁴ Canada's implementation of point-based immigration in 1967 coincided with the peak of political tension between the pro-Communist sympathizers and the Hong Kong government. These tensions, beginning in 1966, cumulated into a series of violent riots and terrorism known as the 1967 riots (*Liuqi baodong* 六七暴動) that left over fifty dead and hundreds injured. According to Wong, the riots triggered the second of three major waves of emigration from Hong Kong since the end of the Second World War, the first being between 1958 and 1961 due to agricultural reforms. Many Hong Kong elites chose to leave to escape the political instabilities at home. This resulted in a surge of Hong Kong migration in the early 1970s that peaked in 1973 (Wong 1992). The third major wave of emigration occurred in the late 1980s in fear of the return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. This peaked after the events of the June Fourth Incident.

remained minimal until the mid-1990s. Taiwanese migration also increased but would remain marginal relative to the Hong Kong and mainland population (Guo and DeVoretz 2007). The Chinese population in Toronto tripled during the 1970s largely as a result of the changes in Canada's immigration system, and the higher economic profile of new migrants induced a revival of Chinese diasporic musical activity in the community.

The first known instance of Chinese orchestral activity in Toronto took place during this period, with the establishment of the Chinese Instrumental Group of the University of Toronto (CIMGUT) in 1969. This ensemble was founded by Ming Chan (陳明生), a student from Hong Kong studying at University of Toronto during Canada's transition into the point-immigration system. Chan returned to Hong Kong during the summer of 1969 and brought back to Toronto a variety of instruments with the intention of forming a musical ensemble to provide a social space for other Hong Kong students "to relax and to stay away from the stress of [the students'] daily lives" (Chan 2001, 190, in interview with Wong). The ensemble began with six members who rented a house where Chan taught and arranged music for the ensemble, introducing Chinese instruments and Chinese orchestral practices to fellow students. CIMGUT differentiated itself from previous Cantonese ensembles by using written scores and heterophonic part-based playing based on Western triadic harmony, a development unique to the modern Chinese orchestra. Chan's efforts propelled a growth in membership as the ensemble reached around twenty members. The ensemble actively performed in Chinese festivals and celebrations across Toronto as a novel option for showcasing Chinese culture. In 1972, the ensemble changed its name to CIMGOT (Chinese Instrumental Music Group of Toronto, *Duolunduo Zhongguo minzu qi yuetuan* 多倫多中國民族器樂團) as many of its members were no longer university students. The ensemble also expanded its scope and began offering group lessons on Chinese instruments

in the community, setting up a hierarchical system where experienced students from these lessons were invited to join the ensemble and become assistant teachers for younger students. This initiative perpetuated Chinese instrumental music in the Toronto community, with alumni such as Patty Chan (陳慧敏) and Tony K.T. Leung (梁家棟) sustaining their musical interests into their careers and remaining active in the Chinese orchestral community into the twenty-first century. Materials such as scores, recordings, and instruments were mostly imported from Hong Kong through Chan and supplemented with transcriptions of music from recordings and radio.

Despite these efforts, membership declined over time due to factors such as work opportunities, changing interests and hobbies, and an overall decrease in availability from participating members. Chan left CIMGOT between 1983 and 1984 for similar reasons, marking a further decline, and CIMGOT eventually disbanded in 1987. Although Chinese instrumentalists continued to perform within the Chinese community, CIMGOT's disbandment marked a short hiatus of organized Chinese orchestral activity until the next major wave of emigration beginning in the late 1980s.

The 1989 June Fourth Incident accentuated many Hong Kong citizens' unease towards Hong Kong's imminent Handover and future under Communist China and prompted a wave of mass emigration from Hong Kong that lasted approximately until 1994. Many of these emigrants chose Canada as their destination, where immigration applications from Hong Kong nearly doubled from 1988 to 1989, tripling in the third quarter as a clear impact of the June Fourth Incident (Lary 1990). Hong Kong sociologist Wong Siu-lun (1992) described this group of emigrants as "predominantly 'yuppies' – young, educated middle class professionals" (4). The June Fourth Incident also prompted the Canadian government to issue permanent resident status to many Chinese students and scholars studying in Canada during this time (Guo & DeVoretz

2007, 6). In mainland China, the incident served as a catalyst for their new middle class to enter an “emigration phase” after a temporary period of restricted travels. These events resulted in a massive population increase in the Toronto Chinese community in the 1990s, specifically those from Hong Kong in the early 1990s, followed by those from mainland China in the latter 1990s (10). It is also important to note that incremental changes in the distribution of Canada’s point-immigration system to become increasingly favorable towards business class independent migrants at the turn of the century also influenced the socioeconomic profiles of incoming Chinese migrants (Guo and DeVoretz 2007, 11).

Compared to the previous wave of Chinese migrants, these new “yuppies” were much more familiar with Chinese instrumental music, due to its increased presence in Hong Kong: since the 1970s, Chinese music had been featured in Hong Kong media and nurtured through educational programs and a robust community of amateur Chinese orchestras (Tsui 1990). These migrants ushered in a phase of cultural development in the Toronto Chinese community in the late 1980s to 1990s, with Chan (2001) documenting a “proliferation of Chinese world-class performers in Toronto and the founding of performance groups, ensembles, and orchestras” (201). Amongst this proliferation, the Chinese orchestra was reintroduced in the community beginning with the Chinese Music Orchestra of Canada (CMOC, *Jianada zhong yuetuan* 加拿大 中樂團) in 1991.

The CMOC originated from the reunion of several alumni of the Wang Kwong Chinese Orchestra (*Hongguang yuetuan* 宏光樂團), a prominent amateur Chinese orchestra in Hong Kong, during community events hosted by the University of Toronto Chinese Students and Scholars Association (UTCSSA). These alumni, led by huqin player Tam Yiu-Chung (譚耀宗), began to gather in each other’s homes to play Chinese orchestral music and gradually drew

interest and membership from other Chinese instrumental enthusiasts. When the group reached twelve members in 1991, they began to refer to themselves as a Chinese orchestra. The orchestra grew rapidly through its participation in the 1992 Hong Kong Festival, followed by a highly successful inaugural concert in 1993 involving renowned Chinese instrumentalists as soloists.²⁵ However, its rapid growth and success also presented difficulties as home rehearsals could not support the growing orchestra and core members developed diverging artistic directions regarding the orchestra's future in consideration of their circumstances. These issues, along with complications in registering the orchestra with the Canadian government, ultimately overwhelmed the orchestra as members disassociated themselves from the ensemble. CMOC was dissolved in 1994 after one last concert as an accompaniment orchestra for a Chinese instrumental concert series presented by Tam's music production company (ROI Productions 1993).

The yuppies also contributed to the revival of Chinese musical activity through the opening of the Toronto branch of Harmony Music Inc (凱聲琴行), by Hong Kong immigrant Lee Hoi (李開) in 1992 (Chan 2001, 191). Founded in 1980, Harmony Music Inc was one of the main suppliers and supporters of Chinese instruments and accessories in Hong Kong, sponsoring numerous music activities in the region. Lee himself was a professional erhu player who was at one point the vice-president of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. The store's opening in Toronto greatly increased the availability of Chinese instruments for operatic and instrumental

²⁵ The 1992 Hong Kong Festival was a national-wide series of events and educational seminars jointly developed by the Canadian and Hong Kong government to foster positive Hong Kong-Canada relations reciprocating the Hong Kong's Festival of Canada in 1991. The festival, spanning almost two months, highlighted social and economic benefits from a close Hong Kong-Canadian relationship while providing avenues to showcase Hong Kong and Chinese culture. Many local Chinese organizations actively participated in the festival through hosting and performing in smaller subsidiary events. The festival has been interpreted by some participants as an effort by the Canadian government to differentiate Hong Kong from the mainland as an endorsement of support towards Hong Kong's promised autonomy (Lary and Rubinoff 1991, 1).

groups in the community, who could previously only acquire such instruments from Asia. Although Lee's arrival coincided with the peak of CMOC's activities, the ensuing discord within CMOC dissuaded him from being deeply involved. He instead opted to support the creation of a separate Chinese orchestra initiated by several dissatisfied CMOC members. This new Chinese orchestra was registered as the Toronto Chinese Music Association (TCMA, *Duolunduo zhongyue xiehui* 多倫多中樂協會), informally known as the Toronto Chinese Orchestra, and rehearsed in Lee's store. Lee would serve as the ensemble's chairperson and be credited as one of its founders.

The Toronto Chinese Music Association (1993) held its inaugural concert on August 28, 1993 in Markham Theatre. According to its organizer, preparation work for the concert began half a year prior to the concert date and included over forty performers, a formidable feat for Chinese musical activities during this time (2). The program featured Chinese musicians flown in from Hong Kong and United States, sponsored largely by Lee, and received encouraging responses from the Chinese community. The ensemble under Lee attempted to capitalize on this appeal in their second concert in August 1994 with a similar cast of international guests, notably featuring National Heritage Fellowship Recipient Tang Liangxing (湯良興) and erhu virtuoso George Gao (高詔青) (Toronto Chinese Music Association 1994, 2). The second concert also saw the beginning of non-Chinese membership in the Toronto Chinese orchestra community with the participation of ethnomusicologist Kim Chow-Morris in the ensemble's wind section (18).²⁶ Unfortunately, these concerts resulted in financial losses despite its popularity, and Lee

²⁶ In her research on Chinese instrumental music, ethnomusicologist and flautist Kim Chow-Morris briefly studied under TCMA *dizi* player Frederick Yiu (姚木興). Her interest in the subject eventually led her to introduce Chinese music courses in several Toronto universities, most notably establishing a Chinese instrumental music ensemble in York University in 2000.

did not pursue a third independent concert. TCMA continued to perform in community events but would not have another independent concert until its 10th anniversary celebration in 2003.

Lee returned to Hong Kong in 1996 as part of a wave of “astronaut” families who returned to Asia after receiving overseas citizenship to pursue economic interests. (Henders and Pittis 1993; Irving, Tsang, and Benjamin 1999).²⁷ His departure, along with factors reminiscent of CIMGOT’s decline such as changing interests and other life commitments, marked a drop in membership as TCMA transitioned to a leadership under Frederick Yiu (姚木興) and Peter Bok (卜利泉). Yiu and Bok introduced regular bi-weekly rehearsals and sought to develop the ensemble’s community presence in Toronto with performances at the Royal Ontario Museum, Kiwanis Music Festival, and Ontario Science Centre. They also established a symbiotic relationship with local Chinese instrumental teachers as a developmental ground for students and welcomed George Gao as the ensemble’s music director and conductor in 1998. Despite these changes, participation rates for ensemble activities experienced a constant fluctuation as members often appeared only in preparation for performance opportunities they saw as appealing. The fluctuation in membership and participation was a factor in other Chinese orchestras established towards the turn of the century as well.²⁸ Chinese orchestral activity was

²⁷ An astronaut family is a family unit where members reside in different countries across the world, usually between the wage earner, or astronaut (*taikong ren* 太空人), pursuing economic advantages abroad and dependents at home. This term was popularized in the late 1980s to 1990s referencing North American Chinese migrants and continues to be a prevalent phenomenon amongst Asian migrants.

²⁸ The two Chinese orchestras established were the Ho Deng Music Ensemble (*He Deng leji* 禾登樂集) by Taiwanese instrumentalist Jeanette Teng (鄧淑貞) and the Overseas Chinese Music Society of Ontario Chinese Instrumental Music Group subsidiary to the Overseas Chinese Music Society of Ontario (*Ansheng haiwai huaren yinyue xiehui* 安省海外華人音樂協會).

Ho Deng Music Ensemble was formed around 1997 consisting primarily of Teng’s students and associates of the Taiwanese Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) where the ensemble rehearses. The ensemble performed primarily Taiwanese folk and traditional repertoire and its activities were largely dependent on Teng’s personal endeavors and network.

The Overseas Chinese Music Society of Ontario was created in 1996 and its Chinese music instrumental group in the early 2000s. The ensemble often collaborated with TCO in performances, and many of its members joined TCO when the group disbanded in 2005.

in essence a voluntary and amateur hobby for its participants to connect to and perpetuate Chinese diasporic culture in Toronto.

3.4 Expansion and Diversification (2000s-2010s)

The number of immigrants from mainland China overtook the number of immigrants from Hong Kong beginning 1996 and had since become the dominant Chinese demographic in Toronto in the twenty-first century (Guo and DeVortez 2007). In tandem to this shift, Chan (2018) documents a rising number of professional and conservatory-educated musicians participating in Toronto Chinese music ensembles (16).²⁹ Existing Chinese orchestras such as the TCMA, now as registered Toronto Chinese Orchestra (TCO, *Duolunduo zhong yuetuan* 多倫多中樂團), also began to implement administrative policies such as weekly rehearsals, player auditions, and contracted positions to elevate their ensemble standards. Although the overall quality of Chinese orchestral performances improved, response towards the demands of these elevated standards varied amongst Chinese orchestral participants. Yangqin virtuoso Zhang Di (2017) observes that participants frequently struggled to abide by standards such as rehearsal attendance and personal preparation that she saw as inherent responsibilities in her ethnographic case study of the TCO (17-18). She also notes the increasing difficulty of contemporary Chinese orchestral repertoire as another potential factor separating amateur participants from professional ones (19). The influx of conservatory-trained musicians ultimately

²⁹ The identification of “professional” when concerning a Chinese instrumentalist is complicated due to the recency in which this identity was developed. According to Chan (2001), the differences between folk and professional Chinese instrumentalists were not clearly defined as late as 1966 as many initial master instrumentalists and conservatory educators had originated from an amateur or folk background. She categorized these teachers as “professional folk” artists and discussed their disdain towards associations with what they regard as amateur folk activities (302-303). Although this disdain has somewhat dissipated amongst newer generations of professional musicians, the discussion around what who can considered professional remains opinionated, with some considering only those with a conservatory background in Asia as true professionals. As an in-depth discussion on the definition of professionalism for Chinese instrumentalists would be beyond the realm of this paper, professional Chinese instrumentalist in this paper will be understood as a musician with prior musical education and an intention to create a livelihood from their music-making.

invigorated an eagerness towards professionalizing Chinese orchestral activity in Toronto and contributed to the formation of new Chinese orchestras that underlined these principles.

The first Chinese orchestra in Toronto to emphasize the differences between professional and amateur Chinese orchestral activity was the Ontario Chinese Orchestra (OCO, *Andaluesheng Zhongguo minzu yuetuan* 安大略省中國民族樂團). Touted as the “first professional Chinese orchestra in Canada,” the orchestra was established by former TCO member Peter Bok with the intent to present high quality professional performances in the community (Ontario Chinese Orchestra 2007). Members of this orchestra comprised entirely of professional musicians who had graduated from “esteemed musical institutions,” implied as a musical education from a Chinese music conservatory; outside of the cellist and percussionist, all other orchestra members in OCO’s inaugural concert had a record of musical education in mainland China (19-23). This exclusivity would be a continuing quality of this orchestra, with active participation for each performance dependent on the available musicians. Bok himself does not perform in this orchestra and served as its executive director. OCO held its inaugural concert on April 14, 2007 with an orchestra of fifteen musicians and a conductor.

Apart from the increase of conservatory-trained instrumentalists, twenty-first century Chinese immigrants induced changes in the purposes of Chinese orchestral activity in Toronto as well. These newer migrants tended to have a strong economic mindset, and thus had a greater focus on the business aspect of music-making and production. An example of such an aspect is the phenomena of Chinese orchestras formed under the name of legal non-profit arts and cultural organizations but are directly subordinate to private businesses. The North American Chinese Orchestra (NACO, *Beimei zhong yuetuan* 北美中樂團) was founded to supplement the business of the Toronto Chinese Music School (*Duolunduo Zhongguo yinyue xueyuan* 多倫多中國音樂

學院), a music academy established by Chinese instrumentalists Ken Chen (*Chen Guochan* 陳國產) and Macie Ho (*He Xiaomei* 何曉梅). Officially registered as a non-profit organization in 2011 after two years of preparation, membership for the orchestra consisted largely of the school's students willing to pay for a performance opportunity with professional musicians. The orchestra introduced itself as Toronto's only quasi-professional Chinese orchestra and was comprised of sixty members, twenty of whom were the school's music teachers, at its inaugural concert in 2011 (North America Chinese Orchestra 2011).

On the other hand, circumstances for which orchestra participants were provided incentives or compensation for their playing also increased. Until the OCO, Chinese orchestras in Toronto were predominantly understood as community orchestras and a voluntary social activity with operation costs covered internally, largely by its members through membership fees, private sponsors, and performance revenue. Apart from special guests and soloists, Chinese orchestral participants regardless of skill level often performed on a volunteer basis with the understanding that performance revenue would be funneled back into sustaining the ensemble. Although this approach towards performance continued in the twenty-first century, newer Chinese orchestras also began to introduce incentives to attract and bolster participants. The Canada Oriental Cultural Orchestra (COCO, *Jianada Dongfang minzu yuetuan* 加拿大東方民族樂團) initiated by businessman and erhu hobbyist Mike Zhou (周和平) is an example of this incentivization with monetary honorariums for participation in the orchestra's performances. Other ensembles such as the Canadian Chinese Orchestra (CCO, *Hongfeng hua yuetuan* 紅楓華樂團) offer educational scholarship programs for the *sheng* and *suona*, instruments with few practitioners outside of Asia, with conditions to participate in the orchestral activities by the latter half of the program and a free instrument when continuing their membership beyond the

program (Canadian Chinese Orchestra 2018a). This notion of compensation added to the growing economic dimension of Chinese orchestral activity in Toronto and affected the decision and commitment of participants to play in specific ensembles.

TCO underwent a shift in artistic direction after being invited to participate in the 2008 Hong Kong International Chinese Music Festival, where they networked with Chinese orchestras from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and across Canada (Chan 2018). The orchestra developed a particularly close relationship with the Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra (gCO, *Xiaojuren sizhu yuetuan* 小巨人絲竹樂團) run by Taiwanese conductor Dr. Chen Chih-Sheng (陳志昇) who provided extensive mentorship and repertoire to support TCO. Chen's support especially influenced concertmaster and Canadian-born instrumentalist Patty Chan, who sought to establish a Canadian Chinese orchestral identity upon taking the role of TCO presidency in 2013. The orchestra began curating Canadian-centric initiatives annually, ranging from the commissioning and performance of Canadian works with Canadian conductors, to cross-country collaborations with Chinese orchestras in Vancouver and Edmonton. The orchestra actively invited non-Chinese and native Canadian participants of wide-ranging backgrounds through an array of subsidiary youth, amateur, and professional ensembles, and organized performances of various popular and film music. Chan also promoted global cultural exchanges, spearheading summer pilgrimages to the Greater China Region to experience contemporary Chinese orchestral activity. These trips, often set up from the connections the orchestra developed during their 2008 Hong Kong festival participation, received considerable positive feedback from participants and fueled Chan's passion for Chinese orchestral music. Several TCO members also travelled individually to study Chinese instrumental music in the Greater China region during this period. Despite these initiatives, TCO underwent an exodus from two groups of participants. Older members were

deterred by the contemporary repertoire and artistic direction, while younger Chinese professionals felt incompatible with the orchestra concerning its standards and management. These former members proceeded to form or join new instrumental ensembles that matched their needs and interests.³⁰ The changes, in addition to the previously addressed ongoing circumstances which cause membership fluctuations in Chinese orchestras, produced an average membership of forty participants throughout Chan's presidency.

3.5 Current Chinese Orchestras in Toronto

Although new Chinese orchestras have been formed in Toronto since the 1990s, many of these orchestras have also become inactive over time. High membership volatility and inability to sustain overhead costs are frequent factors leading to decline since Chinese orchestral activity remains a voluntary hobby for many participants. Despite attempts by some Chinese orchestras to professionalize their activities and ensembles with entirely professional instrumentalists, there are no Chinese orchestras in Toronto performing at a level equivalent to a professional Chinese orchestra in Asia. It is also common for participants to be involved with several Chinese orchestras at the same time, though these involvements are often temporary only to supplement performance demands. Below is a list of Chinese orchestras active in Toronto that continued to perform at regular intervals prior to the onset of COVID-19, followed by an observation of their recent status.³¹ Subsidiary youth or senior orchestras affiliated to those in the list will not be

³⁰ Apart from the OCO, two Chinese orchestras founded by former TCO members are considered active at the time of writing this paper. The two are the Toronto Si-Zhu Chinese Music Ensemble (*Yuanxi sizhu zhong yuetuan* 緣繫絲竹中樂團) led by Karl Pang (彭進秀) who was the conductor of TCO from 2007 until 2015, and the Canadian Chinese Orchestra (CCO, *Hongfeng hua yuetuan* 紅楓華樂團) led by erhu player Amely Zhou (周嘉麗), who coordinated TCO's youth division from 2016 to 2017 before leaving due to a conflict of interest.

³¹ COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019) is a new and highly contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that emerged in late 2019 and responsible for an ongoing global pandemic that severely affected economy and travel in many parts of the world. Although the first case was discovered in Wuhan, China, its exact origin, and source remains unknown. However, its discovery and association with China has led to a growth in Anti-Asian racism and hate crimes as the pandemic continues.

included. Interestingly, there are no active Chinese orchestras based in the Toronto Chinatown. Chinese orchestra activity is largely circulated within the suburban regions around the Greater Toronto Area.

Table 2: Active Chinese Orchestras in Toronto as of 2021

Name of Orchestra	Year established
Toronto Chinese Orchestra 多倫多中樂團	1993
Ho Deng Music Ensemble 禾登樂集	1997
Ontario Chinese Orchestra 安大略省中國民族樂團	2007
Millennium Chinese Music Workshop 千禧雅樂坊	2008
North America Chinese Orchestra 北美中樂團	2011
Toronto Si-Zhu Chinese Music Ensemble 緣繫絲竹中樂團	2012
Canadian Chinese Orchestra 紅楓華樂團	2017
Canada Oriental Cultural Orchestra 加拿大東方民族樂團	2017

The Toronto Chinese Orchestra remains steadfast as the longest running Chinese orchestra in Canada. TCO concertmaster Patty Chan decided to step down from her role as president after an ambitious 2019 multimedia concert featuring international guests from Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. This concert resulted in mixed opinions and burnout affecting some members. Long-time participant and *ruan* player Felix Yeung took up the presidency in 2020 and shifted the orchestra towards virtual channels in the onset of the pandemic. A report regarding TCO's potential post-COVID roadmap was compiled in the summer of 2020, but the direction of TCO remains undefined as the ensemble adjusts to the changes from the pandemic and new leadership.

Ho Deng Music Ensemble maintains a small but steady membership consisting primarily of Taiwanese instrumentalist Jeanette Teng's (鄧淑貞) students and her associates from the Taiwanese Economic and Cultural Office (TECO). Despite the ensemble veering into the domain of a *zheng* ensemble at times from the abundance of the instrument amongst Teng's students rather than a Chinese orchestra, Ho Deng continues to perform regularly both in public events and in private performances. Teng notably arranged two overseas performances with ensembles in Taiwan and was planning a third before the pandemic restricted overseas travel. Their repertoire revolves mainly around Taiwanese folk and zheng pieces.

Although the Ontario Chinese Orchestra continues to operate under the management of Bok, the ensemble faces increasing competition from newer ensembles who share closer cultural ties or offer higher incentives to many of the available professional instrumentalists. Other participants, such as Ken Chen and Macie Ho who formed NACO in 2011, have also become involved in other Chinese orchestras. Its limited membership prevents the ensemble from performing large scale repertoire usually associated with professional Chinese orchestras in Asia and instead revolves around a program of chamber and solo repertoire bookended by a full ensemble piece. Despite these complications, the OCO have held regular series of concerts up until 2020. It is uncertain if the orchestra is continuing its activities during the pandemic.

The Millennium Chinese Music Workshop is a senior-oriented Chinese orchestra led by conductor Bill Ko (高繼標) and based in Mississauga. The ensemble was formed in 2008 by a group of seniors who were passionate about Chinese music. It includes a variety of Western instruments typically not associated with the ensemble such as the recorder and saxophone. The ensemble hosts instrumental lessons, music appreciation classes, and performs regularly for senior homes and community events. The orchestra participants are predominantly Cantonese

who began learning their instruments post-retirement and pursue their orchestral activities as a form of social contribution and educational hobby. The Millennium Chinese Music Workshop continues to rehearse and perform during the pandemic through virtual means.

Orchestral activity of NACO continues to remain subsidiary to the decisions of the Toronto Chinese Music School despite hosting annual concerts since its inauguration. In their 2019 concert celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the founding of PRC, the full ensemble of fifty-five members was only involved in a seventh of the twenty-seven-piece program. They shared joint performances with a choir and played simple rearrangements of folk and popular songs. The rest of the program was dedicated to chamber and solo repertoire usually involving only its professional participants. Based on its concert programs over the years, this musical practice appears to be the norm for the ensemble and successfully retains a dedicated core of recurring student participants. Although the pandemic put an end to this annual concert tradition, NACO appears to continue their activities virtually with the creation of a new YouTube channel in 2020 that also reposts videos of their past performances.

Comprised predominantly of older TCO members who left the orchestra during the twenty-first century, the Toronto Si-Zhu Chinese Music Ensemble lacks any virtual presence apart from a recording of one of their community performances from an unaffiliated observer in 2018. It is unclear whether the ensemble is continuing its activities during the pandemic after its most recent bi-annual concert in 2019. According to its 2019 concert program, the ensemble has eighteen active members and regularly performs in community events. Its ensemble repertoire is not limited to silk and bamboo music but does revolve around traditional Guangdong musical traditions.

The Canadian Chinese Orchestra led by Amely Zhou (*Zhou Jiali* 周嘉麗) has displayed an extraordinary activeness through a variety of community initiatives since its inception in 2017. Highlights of their activity include but are not limited to an international tour and musical exchange through five cities across China's Cantonese region in 2018, participation in CBC Music's Canadian Music Class Challenge, and appearance in TVOKids program *Backyard Beats*. The ensemble also frequently collaborates with other local organizations such as the Aga Khan Museum, Canadian Sinfonietta Youth Orchestra, and Shaolin Temple Quanfa Institute. Membership in CCO is separated between a youth division and senior division mentored by a core of professional instrumentalists. CCO's repertoire balances mid-twentieth century traditional pieces with arrangements of Western and Asian popular music and movie culture. Aside from existing repertoire, Zhou encourages creative input from its younger participants and develops personal arrangements catering to the cultural diversity of the ensemble's collaborators as well. It is also notable that CCO membership extends beyond the Toronto Chinese community with non-Chinese and non-Canadian participants. According to its biography on its YouTube channel, the orchestra aims to "challenge the boundaries of Chinese music-making by reaching out to different people with different identities, to create an equal and inclusive music-making environment for a diversified community" (Canadian Chinese Orchestra 2018b). CCO maintains a weekly rehearsal schedule and an active community presence through virtual classes and workshops during the pandemic.

Finally, the activeness of Canada Oriental Cultural Orchestra under Mike Zhou is ambiguous due to the unique circumstances of the ensemble. Comprised almost entirely of temporary participants invited from other ensembles and overseas guests, this ensemble often enters a period of silence between its concert performances which is also its only orchestral

activity. The ongoing pandemic augments this silence as large gatherings and overseas travel remain heavily restricted in Toronto. Whether its activities will resume post-pandemic would be dependent on Zhou's personal assessment. In its concert performances, COCO showcases repertoire that is predominantly written in twentieth-century Asia or specialty pieces by the invited soloists. According to its program book, the orchestra had thirty-eight members in its 2018 New Year concert (Chinese Oriental Cultural Orchestra 2018).

From the Chinese orchestras listed above, three unique aspects of Chinese orchestral activity can be distinguished: Chinese orchestras as a means of social and cultural integration and preservation, as a means of economic benefit, and as a vehicle for cultural expression and innovation. Although the Chinese orchestras listed above contain elements of all three aspects, each ensemble highlights a specific element over others: The Millennium Chinese Music Workshop, Ho Deng Music Ensemble, and Toronto Si-Zhu Chinese Music Ensemble each revolve around a specific musical style that is familiar to its members; NACO, OCO, and COCO provides economic remuneration for selected participants in return of their participation; CCO and TCO attempt to communicate and emphasize their experiences as part of the overseas Chinese community.

The three aspects of preservation, economization, and innovation also bear semblance to the regional attitudes developed in the Greater China region discussed in the previous chapter. Scholars Shibao Guo and Don J. DeVoretz (2007) suggest an episodic approach to understanding the heterogeneity within the Chinese community in Canada based on their immigration patterns (7). The development of the Chinese orchestra in Toronto largely supports this view as the proliferation of these aspects into the Chinese orchestras in Toronto coincides with demographic changes in the Chinese community from migration. The ensemble's origins and development in

Toronto as a diasporic social activity corresponds with Hong Kong's attitude towards the Chinese orchestra as a means of establishing community among the waves of Hong Kong migration into Canada in the twentieth century. Its gradual attempts at professionalization and economization in the twenty-first century accurately reflects the influx of mainland migrants and the demographic shift in the Toronto Chinese community from Cantonese to mainland Chinese. At the same time, a budding exploration for a unique, Chinese Canadian cultural identity can also be observed beginning in the twenty-first century as older migrants as well as new generations of Chinese Canadians become increasingly assimilated into Canadian society. Hong Kong immigrants, uncomfortable with the changes, also began to internalize and preserve their existing cultural and social practices, an attitude also held by Chinese orchestras established by Taiwanese migrants in Toronto. Despite these growing cultural differentiations, the ensemble's origins as a diasporic activity remain prevalent as orchestras continue to source repertoire and input from Chinese orchestras and participants in Asia. The development of cultural identity in the Toronto Chinese community will be further examined in the next chapter through an analysis of the TCO.

Cultural Identity within the Toronto Chinese Orchestra

4.1 Introduction

The Toronto Chinese Orchestra (TCO), as discussed in the previous chapter, is the longest running Chinese orchestra in Canada. Its history can be divided into four eras revolving around its presidencies: the initial formation under Lee Hoi from 1993 until his departure in 1996; a period of community development and growth from 1996 to 2013 under Frederick Yiu; a period of artistic and cultural exploration under Patty Chan from 2013 until 2019; and Felix Yeung beginning in 2020 before the onset of the global pandemic. These eras, excluding the Yeung, coincide roughly with the demographic changes in the Chinese community in Toronto due to migration and induced a growing heterogeneity in the musical and cultural backgrounds of TCO participants. Despite this diversity along with natural fluctuations in membership over time, the ensemble has developed and maintained a discernable identity with distinctive traits and values. This chapter will analyze how TCO formulates its identity in the Chinese community through its continuity of established cultural associations and its differentiation against other Chinese orchestral practices.

4.2 Continuity in TCO

According to Kazdin (2000), one of the features most often associated with the concept of identity is the idea of continuity, or a sense of sameness across time and place. This sameness, often consisting of multiple subsets of associations forming different aspects of the identity, informs the entity of a connection between who they are today, who they were yesterday, and who they will be tomorrow (222-223). In the case of TCO, this continuity can be observed in the values it accentuates and its repertoire choices.

From its inaugural concert, TCO has indicated a goal to “promote and develop Chinese music... as to harmonize Chinese music in [Canada’s] multi-cultural society” (Toronto Chinese Music Association 1993). The emphasis on an “internationalism” of Chinese cultural development and community-building can be attributed predominantly to the ensemble’s Hong Kong migrant origins. Although the scope and approach towards this goal has varied over the years leading to internal discord and membership exodus at times, the ensemble’s active engagement in both the Chinese and non-Chinese community through the years indicate a continued alignment with this objective.³² TCO’s commitment to community and cultural development consequently informs and perpetuates a similar emphasis within its participants, observed in the ensemble’s 2020 internal report where the sense of community, interest in Chinese music and culture, and association with the ensemble’s history and legacy were identified as core rationales for participation amongst its active members (Leung, et al. 2020). As such, the continued emphasis towards cultural development and community can be considered an essential aspect of TCO’s identity.

A continuity within TCO repertoire can also be observed. Although the ensemble repertoire became increasingly diverse from pop medleys to contemporary multimedia performance pieces after their participation in the 2008 Hong Kong International Chinese Music Festival, the ensemble also programs popular mid-twentieth century repertoire. Pieces such as “Dance of the Yao People” regularly appear in TCO’s concert performances while smaller pieces

³² The aspect of cultural development became especially problematic during Chan’s presidency as Chan shifted the ensemble towards an exploration and assimilation of Canadian cultural elements. The influx of professional instrumentalists beginning twenty-first century also led to an increased interest in the professionalization of Chinese orchestral activity, with several members suggesting TCO becoming a semi-professional ensemble. TCO ultimately refused professionalization and remained a community orchestra, leading to an exodus of participants hoping for professionalization and participants uncomfortable with the new artistic direction under Chan’s presidency.

such as “Blooming Flowers and Full Moon” (*Huahao yueyuan* 花好月圓) and “Martial Arts” (*Wushu* 武術) have become staple encore or community performance pieces. In addition, festive repertoire such as “Step by Step” (*Bubugao* 步步高) and “Golden Snake Dance” (*Jinshe kuangwu* 金蛇狂舞) are regularly performed to the point of being regarded as stock repertoire for the ensemble’s participants. Many of these recurring repertoires are familiar to the twentieth-century Hong Kong migrant population, and despite growing cultural diversity within the ensemble, reflect a continuity in maintaining its diasporic Cantonese roots.

4.3 Differentiation of TCO

TCO’s continuity in Cantonese cultural associations differentiates the ensemble from many of the other Chinese orchestras formed in twenty-first century Toronto. Although the extent of these differences varies between the orchestras, the differences ultimately become factors that interested participants consider when assessing the compatibility between the ensemble and themselves. In particular, the differences in communication, organizational structure, participant diversity, and repertoire selection between TCO and other Chinese orchestras in Toronto can be observed.

Though it is not apparent, English communication is a consistent feature in internal operations of TCO that is not often readily found in other Chinese orchestras in Toronto. This accessibility can be observed in both oral and written communication, where the conductor’s instructions and official announcements are expected to be available in both English and Chinese depending on the participants. The introduction and continuity of this practice may be attributed to consistent inclusion of non-Chinese participants in TCO since Hoi’s presidency, as well as the familiarity with the English language amongst the vast majority of the ensemble’s participants. Although the use of Chinese, particularly Cantonese, remains dominant especially amongst older

members, these are usually reserved to casual conversations with English translations readily available. In contrast, most other Chinese orchestras operate solely through Chinese communication in the language relative to their membership demographic. The only other Chinese orchestra with an emphasis on English accessibility in their communication is the Canadian Chinese Orchestra which engages frequently with younger participants who are accustomed to English.

The emphasis on the identity of being a community-run orchestra also differentiates TCO from many of the other Chinese orchestras in Toronto. This is especially reflected in its flexibility in adapting to different leaderships and changing circumstances. Although TCO did retain a predominantly Cantonese leadership, substantial changes in rehearsal locations, board of directors, participants, and internal operations have never substantially diminished the continuity of TCO's activities and presence in the Toronto community. This is in distinct contrast to other Chinese orchestras which continue to remain largely dependent on the efforts of their founders to maintain and spearhead their operations. This flexibility over multiple leaderships allowed a diversity in TCO's participants as opposed to the defined memberships of other Chinese orchestras, which tend to focus on specific demographics such as those whose background, intentions, and culture reflect those of the founding community. In turn, the participant diversity expanded the scope of TCO's operations into developing subsidiary groups such as their youth, hobby, and professional ensembles.

The flexibility from the community-oriented structure of TCO induced gradual diversification in their repertoire selection as well. Although TCO continued to maintain a set of recurring repertoires and source material from Asia, they also began to experiment with commissioning native Canadian works and multimedia performances starting with the world

premiere of “Dream of Fenghuang” (*Feng zhi meng* 鳳之夢) by Chinese Canadian composer Tony K. T. Leung in 2010. The commissioning of original Canadian compositions would become a regular feature unique to TCO and develop into a distinct willingness to attempt soundscapes and techniques atypically heard in other Chinese orchestras. This open-mindedness towards unfamiliarity is best illustrated in the premiere of TCO’s 2017 composition competition winner “Stargazing’s End” and be balanced with traditional and popular repertoire in the program. This broad range in repertoire selection stemming from the diversity of its participants differentiates TCO from other Chinese orchestras in Toronto, who often relegate solely to repertoire popular and familiar amongst its intended demographics.

Conclusion

The Chinese orchestra has been a significant medium in expressing the heterogenic cultural identities of the Chinese across the Greater China region since the mid-twentieth century. This cultural heterogeneity was episodically introduced into Toronto as Canada's point-system immigration initiated a period of prolific Chinese migration which helped establish local Chinese orchestras as a form of diasporic activity. At the same time, gradual assimilation of Canadian culture within portions of the Chinese community generated interest to identify and express a unique Chinese-Canadian identity. This negotiation between diasporic and assimilated values ultimately formulates the cultural identity within the Chinese community in Toronto. This is illustrated through the Toronto Chinese Orchestra, which currently maintains a distinctive identity that pays homage to both its diasporic origins and Canadian integration through the balancing of specific cultural emphases and repertoire selection.

This research is largely preliminary and serves as an introduction to diasporic Chinese cultural identity through the vantage point of overseas Chinese orchestral activity. This introductory contribution provides insight into the history and development of the Chinese orchestra in Toronto. A further analysis on repertoire similarities and differences between the various Chinese orchestras in Toronto may provide a more acute perspective on the heterogenic nature of the Chinese community.

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Appendix

List of Chinese Terms

1967 Riots (Liùqī bàodòng)	六七暴動
228 Incident (Èr'èrbā shìjiàn)	二二八事件
Amely Zhou (Zhōu Jiālì)	周嘉麗
Anti-Japanese War Rhapsody (Kàngri zhànzhēng zhǔtí kuángxiǎng)	抗日戰爭主題狂想
Anti-Rightist Campaign (Fǎnyòu yùndòng)	反右運動
Báihuà	白話
Bill Ko (Gāo Jìbiāo)	高繼標
Blooming Flowers and Full Moon (Huāhǎo yuèyuán)	花好月圓
Bó	鉞
Broadcasting Corporation of China Chinese Orchestra (Zhōngyāng diàntái yīnyuèzǔ guóyuèduì)	中央電台音樂組國樂隊
Broadcasting Corporation of Taiwan's Chinese orchestra (Zhōngguǎng guóyuètuán)	中廣國樂團
Cài Yuánpéi	蔡元培
Canada Oriental Cultural Orchestra (Jiānádà dōngfāng mínzú yuètuán)	加拿大東方民族樂團
Canadian Chinese Orchestra (Hóngfēng huá yuètuán)	紅楓華樂團
Chen Chih-Sheng (Chén Zhìshēng)	陳志昇
China Broadcasting Chinese orchestra (Zhōngguó guǎngbò mínzú yuètuán)	中國廣播民族樂團
Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement (Zhōnghuá wénhuà fùxīng yùndòng)	中華文化復興運動
Chinese Instrumental Music Group of Toronto (Duōlúnduō Zhōngguó mínzú qì yuètuán)	多倫多中國民族器樂團
Chinese Music Orchestra of Canada (Jiānádà zhōng yuètuán)	加拿大中樂團
Chinese Nationalist Party (Guómíndǎng, WG: Kuomintang)	國民黨
Chuīdǎ	吹打
Congratulatory Speech at the Fourth Congress of China Literary and Art Workers (Zài Zhōngguó Wénxué Yìshù Gōngzuò zhě dì sì cì dài biǎo dàhuì shàng de zhùcí)	在中國文學藝術工作者第四次代表大會上的祝辭
Dàhú	大胡
Dance of the Yao People (Yáo zú wǔqǔ)	瑤族舞曲

Dàruǎn	大阮
Datong Music Society (Dàtóng Yuèhuì)	大同樂會
Dèng Xiǎopíng	鄧小平
Dí	笛
Dīhú	低胡
Dīyīn géhú	低音革胡
Dream of Fenghuang (Fèng zhī mèng)	鳳之夢
Dúzòu	獨奏
Èrhú	二胡
Fěi	匪
Frederick Yiu (Yáo Mùxìng)	姚木興
Gāohú	高胡
Géhú	革胡
General's Command (Jiāngjūn lìng)	將軍令
George Gao (Gāo Zhàoqīng)	高詔青
Golden Snake Dance (Jīnshé kuángǔ)	金蛇狂舞
Great Leap Forward (Dà Yuèjìn)	大躍進
Gǔ	鼓
Gǔ wéi jīnyòng, yáng wéi zhōngyòng	古為今用、洋為中用
Guǎn	管
Guó	國
Guó yuètuán	國樂團
Guóyuè	國樂
Hakka (Kèjiā)	客家
Hànyǔ pīnyīn	漢語拼音
Harmony Music Inc (Kǎishēng qín xíng)	凱聲琴行
Hézòu	合奏
Ho Deng Music Ensemble (Hé Dēng lèjì)	禾登樂集
Hokkien (Fújiàn)	福建
Holo-ue (Hé luò huà)	河洛話
Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (Xiānggǎng zhōng yuètuán)	香港中樂團
Hong Konger (Xiānggǎng rén)	香港人
Huá	華
Huá yuètuán	華樂團

Huáqiáo Hundred Flowers Campaign (Bǎihuā Qífàng)	華僑 百花齊放
Institute of the Improvement of Chinese Music (Guóyuè gǎijìnshè)	國樂改進社
Jeanette Teng (Dèng Shūzhēn) Jiǎng Jièshí, WG: Chiang Kai-shek Jiang Jingguo, WG: Chiang Ching-kuo Jiāngnán sīzhú Jiǎnpǔ June Fourth Incident (Liùsì shìjiàn)	鄧淑貞 蔣介石 蔣經國 江南絲竹 簡譜 六四事件
Kaohsiung City Chinese Orchestra (Gāoxióngshì guó yuètuán) Karl Pang (Péng Jīnxiù) Ken Chen (Chén Guóchǎn)	高雄市國樂團 彭進秀 陳國產
Lee Hoi (Lǐ kāi) Lín Yùtíng Little Giant Chinese Chamber Orchestra (Xiǎojùrén sīzhú yuètuán) Liú Tiānhuá Liǔqín Luó	李開 林昱廷 小巨人絲竹樂團 劉天華 柳琴 羅
Macie Ho (Hé Xiǎoméi) Máo Zédōng Martial Arts (Wǔshù) May Fourth Movement (Wǔsì yùndòng) Mike Zhou (Zhōu Héping) Millennium Chinese Music Workshop (Qiānxǐ yǎyuèfāng) Míng Chan (Chén Míngshēng) Mínnán huà Mínzú yīnyuè Mínzú yuètuán Music Office (Yīnyuè shìwù chù) Mùyú	何曉梅 毛澤東 武術 五四運動 周和平 千禧雅樂坊 陳明生 閩南話 民族音樂 民族樂團 音樂事務處 木魚
National Chinese Orchestra Taiwan (Táiwān guó yuètuán)	臺灣國樂團

National Taiwan Academy of Arts Experimental Chinese Orchestra (Guóli Yìzhūān Shíyàn guó yuètuán) New Culture Movement (Xīn Wénhuà yùndòng) North America Chinese Orchestra (Běiměi zhōng yuètuán)	國立藝專實驗國樂團 新文化運動 北美中樂團
Ontario Chinese Orchestra (Āndàlüèshěng Zhōngguó mínzú yuètuán) Overseas Chinese Music Society of Ontario (Ānshěng Hǎiwài Huárén yīnyuè xiéhuì)	安大略省中國民族樂團 安省海外華人音樂協會
Páigǔ Patty Chan (Chén Huìmǐn) Péng Xiūwén Peter Bok (Bo Lìquán) Phoenix Cantonese Opera Ensemble (Xiānfèngmíng yuèjùtuán yuèduì) Pípá Pò sìjiù lì sìxīn	排鼓 陳慧敏 彭修文 卜利泉 仙鳳鳴粵劇團樂隊 琵琶 破四舊立四新
Qǐzòu	起奏
Reform and Opening (Gǎigé Kāifàng) Revolutionary Drama (Yàngbǎn xì)	改革開放 樣板戲
Sān yì Sānxián Shanghai Chinese Orchestra (Shànghǎi mínzúyuètuán) Shēng Sì yì Fisherman's Song of the East China Sea (Dōnghǎi yúgē) Spring Blossoms on a Moonlit River (Chūnjiāng huā yuèyè) Spring Festival Overture (Chūnjié xùqǔ) Step by Step (Bùbùgāo) Suǒnà	三邑 三弦 上海民族樂團 笙 四邑 東海漁歌 春江花月夜 春節序曲 步步高 嗩吶
Tàikōng rén Taipei Chinese Orchestra (Táiběi Shìlì guó yuètuán) Táiwān rén Talk with Music Workers (Tóng yīnyuè gōngzuò zhě de tánhuà)	太空人 臺北市立國樂團 台灣人 同音樂工作者的談話

Tam Yiu-Chung (Tán Yàozōng)	譚耀宗
Tāng Liángxìng	湯良興
Tony K.T. Leung (Liáng Jiādòng)	梁家棟
Toronto Chinese Music Association (Duōlúnduō zhōngyuè xiéhuì)	多倫多中樂協會
Toronto Chinese Music School (Duōlúnduō Zhōngguó yīnyuè xuéyuàn)	多倫多中國音樂學院
Toronto Chinese Orchestra (Duōlúnduō zhōng yuètuán)	多倫多中樂團
Toronto Si-Zhu Chinese Music Ensemble (Yuánxì sīzhú zhōng yuètuán)	緣繫絲竹中樂團
Vanguard Chinese Orchestra of the Jinan Military Region (Jǐnán Jūnqū Qiánwèi mínzú yuètuán)	濟南軍區前衛民族樂團
Wàixǐng rén/Dàlù rén	外省人/大陸人
Wang Kwong Chinese Orchestra (Hóngguāng yuètuán)	宏光樂團
White Terror (Báisè Kǒngbù)	白色恐怖
Xīyuè	西樂
Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (Yán'ān wényì zuòtánhuì)	延安文藝座談會
Yángqín	揚琴
Zhēng	箏
Zhèng Jīnwén	鄭覲文
Zhōng yuètuán	中樂團
Zhōnghú	中胡
Zhōngruǎn	中阮
Zhōngyuè	中樂