Jazz Meets East

Cultural Dimensions of Asynchronous Jazz Music Development in Modern China

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Acknowledgements

This paper would not have happened without the support of the Oberlin College East Asian Studies Department, the musicians of the Beijing and Shanghai Jazz scenes and numerous individuals:

Dr. Marc Blecher
Dr. Sheila Jager
Dr. David Kelley
Nathaniel Gao

As well as all my close friends and family across the world who supported me in the development and completion of this project:

David Hsieh (Dad), Priscilla Ching (Mom), Nathan Hsieh (Happy Sibling), JQ Whitcomb, Xia Jia, Zhang Ke, Wu “Bei Bei” Yongheng, Alex Morris, Andy Hunter, Yuan “Tia” Yawei, Liang Yin

Thank you for your friendship, love and support.
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Forward: Jazz in China

In the summer of 2009, I had the opportunity to study Mandarin Chinese at one of Oberlin College’s affiliated programs, in Beijing. As a Chinese-American who had grown up with little knowledge and observable influence of Chinese culture on my life, I had picked Chinese language as my focus, as a way of familiarizing myself with a culture that seemed as distant as the country, from my North Carolina childhood. I quickly realized that Beijing’s aesthetic modernity was far more than just a collection of modern and localized influences. The tides of a cultural and political tug-of-war were responsible for the shifting identities of the city from district to district and place to place. I soon realized that Beijing and Shanghai played host to a variety of music genres, including “live Jazz”. Being a Jazz trombone major in the Oberlin Conservatory as well, I decided that I wanted to continue exploring this dynamic of the city: I returned to China four more times after 2009, bringing with me three different sextet configurations of Oberlin musicians in an effort to develop an international fellowship network of artists. Through these tours to China, and the personal relationships I developed with the local musicians and their kin, I was able to piece together some initial observations about music in Beijing and Shanghai. Both are coastal, modern cities that fall under the “Tier One” category for expansive economic development and population size. The CCP places political priority on these cities, as they have demonstrated significant importance to the overall political, economic and social growth of China. However, the Shanghai and Beijing Jazz scenes produce two distinct “Jazz aesthetics” which I will further explain, later. My thesis aims in part to explain this puzzle of asynchronous development of two unique Jazz aesthetics in China, through the influences of politics.
The Jazz Scene and Aesthetic

For our purposes, the “Jazz aesthetic” includes several dimensions: historical (musical traditions), the scene (the players, audiences and patrons), economic (the market for music and the players) and political (effects of the local and central state as well as of popular nationalism). The convergence of these forces shapes the Jazz aesthetic of the city: the kind of music that develops and gets played.

Further Commentary

As this is a paper that tries to bring clarity to the broad notion of Jazz music in China, my analysis into the musicological aspects of the scene may be more in depth than most current research. Thus, when I refer to the “American Jazz tradition”, I refer to the broadly-generalized notion of American-based Jazz music that incorporates elements of Negro spirituals, blues, big band, swing and bebop. Since the late 1940s concluded in the termination of broad contact between Western and Chinese cultural practices after the Communist Revolution, the bebop idiom is the last tradition in American musical history to have touched China before Dengist economic liberalization began in 1978. While the American Jazz tradition is a broad generalization of the music, it also refers to the monolithic dominance of American thought and culture within the Jazz tradition. While it is certainly not comprised of a single sociopolitical or cultural narrative, until recent years it has always subsumed the music of regional identities from across the world. In other words, the musical language of ethnic and cultural identities has always been superimposed onto the American Jazz idioms (iii-VI-ii-V-I, dominant seventh chords,
swung 4/4 and 3/4 meters). Thus, it is plausible to treat American Jazz music as a hegemonic narrative, in the context of the global development of Jazz music. It is clear that in China, local musicians are at the center of an effort to develop Chinese Jazz: that is, a music that equally emphasizes the “Chinese” and the “Jazz”. While historically, musicians such as Li Jinhui, and Buck Clayton labored to accomplish this monumental task, today’s Chinese musicians’ struggle to write this idiom has been complicated by the fact that “Jazz music” is now a post-modern musical language that no longer singularly reflects the cultural constraints of the American musical tradition. The global corpus of Jazz musicians has already deconstructed Jazz music into a plethora of unique subgenres. As such, writing Chinese Jazz is as difficult as ever. Because of the complexity and the scope of my research, I am not leveling a broad comparative cultural analysis of American versus Chinese Jazz development. Rather, I am interested solely in the dynamics behind domestic Chinese Jazz development and aesthetic focus. In the following chapters, I hope to convey a realistic picture of the increasingly complex and subliminal web of influences on Chinese Jazz musicians and their art.
Chapter 1: Introduction; The Importance of Cultural Politics and Art

In early October 2011, the Standing Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gathered for the Third Plenary Meeting of the 15th Central Committee. One of the major topics was the importance of reviving Chinese culture in light of the growing view on the mainland that “global opinion [was] stacked against them”. Key politicians emphasized improvement of internet censorship controls, particularly with regard to micro-blogs (“wei-bo’s”) and internet forums where Chinese netizens fomented dissent and discord in response to corrupt practices, scandals and political issues. Redeveloping a Chinese culture that promoted positive socialist values would be important to developing a positive global image abroad as well as at home, the Party thought. In addition to internet dissent, there was also one area that had long worried Chinese politicians. The role of artists in Chinese society had always posed a double-edged sword to the CCP: on the one hand, artists with pop appeal like Kung-fu novelist Jin Yong, pianist Lang Lang, and the rest of the Mando-pop industry had always provided the CCP with a host of cultural ambassadors who would readily extol the virtues of the CCP home and abroad in exchange for government support. On the other hand, trumpeter and Rock star Cui Jian had garnered the support of thousands of pro-democracy students in 1989, which culminated in the bloody confrontation at Tiananmen Square. Ai Wei Wei, the son of a prominent Chinese poet, was tortured and forced into home exile after creating provocative pieces that highlighted Chinese human rights abuses. What role were artists to play in the new development of Socialist culture?

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Even before the Communist revolution of 1949, the Chinese state had always enforced the Confucian hegemonic principle that culture was extremely important in defining China’s national identity. These Confucian precepts of culture, place in society and the role of tradition shaped the responses to themselves in such that the subordinated Chinese intelligentsia readily espoused them. As a result, a hundred years of state-run modernization has seen an evolving corpus of legislation aimed promoting or suppressing different kinds of culture, ranging from graphic art to music to literature.

In today’s world of globalization, modernization, and instantaneous change to society, how the Chinese state comes to decisions on the control and identification of negative culture is a complex and puzzling problem. The traditional narrative of the West posits that “music speaks louder than words” and can be understood and appreciated, regardless of political affiliation, cultural or ethnic identity. Richard Kraus attacks this notion that music is an international language that solely focuses on aesthetics. Instead, he proposes that the spread of Western music always accompanies the systematic struggle of ideology that is brought about by the localized political and economic changes of introducing capitalism. He argues that in the early 20th century, the adoption of Western Classical music by the Chinese middle class stemmed from the issue of China’s modernity—“the key to transforming its weak and impoverished nation.”² In other words, one must observe the interplay of cultural and political forces at work behind the development of aesthetics in the context of globalization.

With regard to music, Western Classical music has become the poster child of Chinese literati circles since the Cultural Revolution. The Western Classical music

industry receives healthy government subsidies because of the prevailing view that a
well-developed Classical music culture is a symbol of a developed industrial economy.
By contrast, Chinese Rock music is carefully monitored by the government for its
potential to cause civil unrest and “spiritual pollution” among younger, more rebellious
audiences. All this points to the direct relationship between art and politics—that art can
provide a unique window into understanding the political dynamics behind the
Communist Party’s efforts to maintain its power, legitimacy and hegemony.

Nearly every developed country has incorporated American Jazz music into its
indigenous culture, at some point. South and Central American countries such as Brazil,
Argentina, Cuba and Mexico embraced and incorporated Jazz and blues deeply into their
own cultures. Europe has remained a bastion of Jazz music, beginning with Dexter
Gordon’s 1950s hiatus in Montmartre. Since the end of World War II, Japan has become
the world’s largest importer of Jazz. Even South Africa hosts one of the world’s largest
Jazz gatherings, the Capetown Jazz Festival. Yet within the greater picture of China’s
globalization, jazz music remains marginal, limited to asynchronous development in
individual localities. My thesis aims in part to explain this puzzle in terms of the politics
swirling around Chinese art.

**Shanghai vs. Beijing Jazz**

It also takes up a second puzzle: the differences between Jazz in Shanghai and
Beijing. One of the first things to notice about the Shanghai Jazz aesthetic is the
accessibility and strength of the local Jazz industry. Financially, the Shanghai Jazz scene
is extremely well-developed. The JZ Club, opened by Bassist Ren Yuqing, carries the
same sort of furnishings, drinks and atmosphere as any Western high-end Jazz establishment, such as the Blue Note or Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola, in New York. These clubs often engage in niche marketing, choosing to focus on particular styles within the Jazz music umbrella, such as blues, R&B, Hip-hop or traditional 1950’s “straight-ahead” Bebop. This niche-marketing is designed to have a discernible aesthetic appeal to the patrons and fans in the audience, who tend to frequent clubs as a show of culture and class. Yet, even though Jazz music has undergone commodification, the musicianship still remains at a remarkably high level. A large number of foreign musicians from the United States, Europe and other developed nations reside in Shanghai, bringing their vastly superior musical training to the scene. Often, these are young, unestablished musicians who have difficulty finding financial stability in their native countries. According to one American trumpet-player and recent college graduate, the market demand was strong enough that musicians could create informal guilds to set price floors for musician fees. Yet the JZ Jazz festival this year also included performances by world-renowned masters such as pianist McCoy Tyner, saxophonist Kenny Garrett, and trumpeters Roy Hargrove and Eric Truffaz.

Beijing

Aesthetically, Beijing’s Jazz music industry is much less developed. There are fewer Jazz clubs in Beijing than Shanghai, and even fewer that could compare with the aesthetic trappings of mid-town New York establishments. The Shanghainese club-chain Cigars Jazz Wine (CJW) attempted to spread the elitist, posh Shanghai Jazz image, but it failed to take root in Beijing, as did multiple other club ventures by Shanghai music

3 “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
entrepreneurs. The Beijing Jazz scene prominently features institutions that focus much less on aesthetics: East Shore Jazz Café features little more than black-painted hardwood floors, flashlights at each table for reading menus, and a Zyldjian ride cymbal hung over the tiny stage. Jiang Hu Bar, a renovated traditional Chinese four-sided courtyard-house (四合院), resides in a small alley off the East Drum Tower Street.

While the physical appearance of these clubs may not live up to their Shanghainese counterparts, the Beijing music scene focuses far more intensely on the artistry and diversity of offerings. East Shore and Jiang Hu both focus on bringing the best domestic Chinese musicians to the stage, including pianist Xia Jia, trumpeter Wen Zhiyong, drummer Wu Yongheng, bassist Zhang Ke and guitarist Liu Yue. While these Chinese musicians are trained in the vocabulary of Jazz music, their artistic tendencies tend to transcend traditional categorization. Experimental groups like Ah-Q, the Red Hand Jazz Quartet and the Xia Jia Acoustic Trio have found a number of domestic and foreign patrons who support them through a community built on a local fan-base and welcoming establishments. Many of these musicians incorporate Jazz music, Western and traditional Chinese Classical music, Rock and even Electronic music together into new genres and styles.

Two important questions arise regarding the development of Jazz music in China. First, what common elements explain why Jazz music in these two cities, and indeed the country as a whole, is so less well developed than in other non-Western countries that managed to import and adapt it? Second, what explains the different aesthetic foci in the country’s two greatest cities and major centers of such Chinese Jazz music?
I will examine Jazz music in these two cities, with reference to the historical roots of Jazz in China, the competing co-development of different concepts of Chinese modernity in Shanghai and Beijing, as well as the economic and political factors that affect the development of Jazz music.

More important, however, is the need to paint a fuller picture of the complexity of arts in China. Over the past century, the West has developed the view that Chinese artists remain locked in a struggle against the Chinese government. This view is not only wrong, but carries an ideologically pointed supposition: that art for arts sake must contradict the norms of the state. Consequentially, the politics of Chinese Jazz music do not necessarily reflect this binary struggle of artist against the state; rather, they reflect a deep history of hegemonic ideological commitment to the political, moral and social benefits of music. Studying the musicians of Beijing and Shanghai reveals subtle influences on Chinese Jazz music, audiences, and venues: artists must balance political, aesthetic, financial and intellectual motivations for their work. Information such as the political tendencies of musicians, how well are shows attended and who attends them, economy and even simple queries regarding the architectural, aesthetic decoration and physical construction of a Jazz club or the average dress of musicians on stage, can tell us more about the roles of culture, politics, economics and history, on the larger Chinese stage.

I will argue that the development of contrasting Jazz aesthetic forms in Shanghai and Beijing can be explained by supportive or suppressive local policies towards artists and their craft, the presence or absence of local history of the music, and the financial, political and aesthetic foci of musicians, venues and audiences. Finally, this phenomenon of cultural localization in China marginalizes the overall development of Jazz music as a
plethora of dissimilar aesthetics, according to the political, economic and historical identities of each region.

Methods

The overarching analysis of Jazz music in China is committed on two tiers of an analytical model. The first level of the overarching structure of this paper deals with the larger interplay of ideologies and cultures at the state level. As previously indicated, Kraus highlights both the need to reexamine seemingly innocuous cultural isms that are created by introducing global culture to the developing world, and the historical and continuing symbiotic relationship between the development and survival of Chinese art and state politics. This key framework puts cultural exchange in the context of its effect on the state.

The second piece of the framework deals with the definition of the Chinese state. Scholars have long disaggregated the Chinese state, culture and society into its plethora of distinct local forms and identities that are tied together by economic and political needs and the military might of the Communist Party. Even within China, many of these unique localities display different reactions to domestic economic and social policies of the Communist Party.

When combined with the first layer of analysis, disaggregating the Chinese national identity becomes useful for explaining these regional differences in culture and history and more specifically, allows for closer examination of the process of modernization within different Chinese localities. Beijing and Shanghai represent the two cities with the highest economic growth and population size. The introduction of Jazz
music into China reflects the political, historical, and socioeconomic differences that make up the regional identities of these cities. This comparative model allows for a study that is as close to a “controlled experiment” as possible. Given the similarities between Beijing and Shanghai, comparatively studying the contrasting regional Jazz music aesthetics in each city affords us the opportunity to examine how regional politics, economics, history, and sociology have shaped that aesthetic.
Chapter 2: The Arts Legacy in China: The Politicization of Art in China

Politicization of Chinese culture began long before the rise and dominance of the Chinese Communist Party. Imperial Chinese tradition had long viewed music and poetry as a codified doctrine for preserving morality and relationships, resulting in the maintenance of society as a whole.

“The Master said, "It is by the Odes that the mind is aroused.
"It is by the Rules of Propriety that the character is established.
"It is from Music that the finish is received.""^4

In *The Party and the Arty in China*, Richard Kraus argues that “[in China] Art was twinned with powering a political culture in which claims to authority could be validated with beauty or under-mined by poor aesthetic achievement"^5. Kraus argues that the expectations for artists to craft moral doctrine separate the Western and Chinese concepts of art and that this tradition has been passed down all the way to modern China, a key factor in influencing the relationships between the state and art.

In 1920, the turn of the decade, the prevailing majority of the Chinese intellectual community, galvanized by the May 4th movement, had launched into a fury of modernization as a response to the hegemonic dominance and colonization of China by the Western Imperialist powers and the increasing aggression of the Japanese empire. This struggle to modernize and redefine a national Chinese identity was reflected in a vast effort to create a strong Chinese culture, not surprisingly known as the New Culture Movement. Artists, many of whom were members of the Chinese intellectual elite,

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attempted to redefine the Chinese national identity through their unique contributions, which took on a plethora of forms and differing ideals.

**Politics of Art in Pre-1949 Shanghai**

From 1920 until the Japanese invasion in 1937, both Beijing and Shanghai were centers of China’s intellectual movement, in culture and arts. Beijing University was the epicenter of the May 4 Movement and Shanghai was experiencing unrivaled economic growth. The May 4 movement saw the shift of intellectuals from Beijing to Shanghai. While both cities were heavily inflected with the national and class struggles happening at the time, Shanghai best represented a microcosm of precarious Chinese sociopolitical dynamics. The presence of imperialist powers and the influx of huge sums of European wealth created a stark contrast to the local peasantry and working class Chinese. The weak Nationalist Government attempted to salvage the pieces of the Qing dynasty and create a militarized state. Finally, the elite intelligentsia set about trying to piece together a dynamic, new Chinese culture amidst the tumultuous political backdrop of imperialism and westernism. Nowhere else in the country was a city so representative of the global and domestic cultural ebb and flow than Shanghai: while the European Imperialist powers had carved up the city into respective spheres of influence, Shanghai was also experiencing the constant influx of Chinese intellectual elites, who were engaging in a frenzy of nation-building as a response to the debilitation of the Chinese state after the Opium and Sino-Japanese war and cession of Hong Kong to Great Britain. In other words, the cultural and social musings of the Shanghainese intellectual elite posed the core questions that plagued the nation—how to build a national culture that represented
the unique idiosyncrasies, philosophy, and tradition of China, but could also represent a modernized, globalized state?

In the world of music, the politics of defining Chinese culture were especially prevalent. The politicization of music in the Republican age can be divided into several areas under which music was used as a conductor of nationalism and development of Chinese identity. These four prevailing views on developing national Chinese music conflicted over the landscape of Pre-1949 Chinese society. First, the creation of institutions for “serious music” such as the Shanghai Conservatory focused on emulating and learning Western Classical music as a way of developing competition with foreign powers.

Second, the Guomindang emphasized a Neo-Confucian regulatory approach to culture, as a way to develop the national Chinese identity. Such methods involved the policing of culture. The Republican government had set China on a series of tumultuous cultural reforms aimed at the promotion or constriction of art in order to promote the progress of developing the Chinese state. In the 1920s, several plays were banned for reasons of social mores, including the employment of women as actors (Jones 2001). Repressive policies limiting the roles of women in music, art, and literature also banned popular music, striving instead to create a culture of militarization and national unity. Perhaps the inability of the Guomindang to dominate the cultural landscape of Chinese musical development was due to the relative unpopularity of its attempt to revive Neo-Confucian social values, rendering it obsolete as a cultural hegemon.

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Third, Nie Er’s development of leftist anthems stressed the need for music to exercise “explicitly revolutionary” qualities. Such phonographic realism centered on the necessity to reflect the struggle of ordinary Chinese people. These leftist songs channeled Soviet influences, and would be later championed by the Chinese Communists. Both the Guomindang and Leftist movements strove for unity, through music, among all strata of Chinese society, but differed on the terms of the ruling class. Nie Er advocated revolution on behalf of the working class, whereas the Guomindang advocated a traditionalist adherence to revitalized interpretations of Neo-Confucian values.

Buck Clayton: Shanghai’d in Shanghai

Fourth is the development of shidai qu, or modern songs, in Shanghai—a mixture of Jazz influences from America, Hollywood film music and Chinese traditional folk songs. Its development began in the late 1920s with the passing through of several notable American music ensembles, including the Jack Carter Band, The Chocolateers, and the Five Hot Shots as well as Buck Clayton’s own ensemble. Clayton, a trumpet player who had played lead horn in Duke Ellington’s band, would later go on to play with Count Basie, Benny Goodman and Harry James. At the time, Clayton cited the Depression as a prime reason for choosing to leave the States to find work. Clayton began his Shanghai voyage playing at the Canidrome Ballroom, a Jazz club and racetrack that catered exclusively to westerners and Chinese elites (such as Madam Chiang Kai-Shek and her ilk), six nights a week. That he did so indicates that bands primarily

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8 Ibid., 6.
10 Ibid, 61.
composed of African Americans were much more in style than others, for their ability to play dance music as well as popular European Classical music, from Ravel’s *Bolero* to Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*. Clayton cites a bar fight between his band and white American southern colonialists as the primary reason for the band’s subsequent dismissal from the Canidrome Ballroom. As such, the members of the Buck Clayton Ensemble found themselves stranded in Shanghai, with no ticket back. Because of his fame among the local Chinese elites, Clayton’s reduced band began to work at venues that served the growing Chinese *petit-bourgeoisie*. The new audience forced Clayton to find familiar music, turning to Chinese folk songs. “[I]t wasn’t too different from our own music except the Chinese have a different scale tone, but as long as it could be written in on the American scale it could be played,” he recalled. It was precisely during these two years that Clayton’s band influenced Li Jinhui, a scholar, play and songwriter, who would become both a prolific and excoriated song writer. Li would become the singular force behind the development of *shidaiqu*, a unique Shanghai Jazz aesthetic and prototype of modern Mandarin pop.

Li, the pioneer of *shidai qu*, an openly mass-market, commercialized music aesthetic, was excoriated by both Leftist and Nationalist critics alike for the “yellow” or pornographic and commercial qualities of his music. One of the aforementioned banned plays entitled “Conscience” was written by Li. Jones discusses why Li Jinhui’s music was actually as much a product of nation-building and modernization as any of his leftist or Neo-Confucianist counterparts—that the aesthetic of modern songs and the market system under which Shanghainese starlets shot to fame, achieved *exactly* what critics

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12 Ibid., 76.
derided it for lacking: a unique Chinese identification\textsuperscript{13}. He also argues that Li’s unique Jazz-traditional fusion was the direct result of the intellectual fervor that he experienced at Beijing University in the 1920s, where he was also a major advocate of mandarin as the standard national language.

Li’s music was particularly popular among the Chinese middle class precisely because of its marketability. Pretty girls singing familiar folk tunes, with a modern harmonic twist easily appealed to the ears and eyes of the young, old, poor and nouveau-riche. Yet, because of its intense popularity, lack of overt nation-building sentiment and close association with the brothels, a segment of society that the leftists treated with particular disgust, Li was publicly excoriated from all sides as being a proponent of imperialist capitalism and a pornographer of “yellow music”.

\textit{Communism: 1949-1978}

In 1949, the Communists forced the Nationalists off the mainland. Many of the rich land owners and Chinese capitalist elites left or were persecuted under Communist rule. Li Jinhui’s mass-market audience largely fled from Shanghai to Hong Kong, which remained a colony of Great Britain. During the next forty or so years, the unique musical aesthetic he had penned would develop into Hong Kong Canto-pop and Taiwanese Mando-pop, today’s modern multi-million-dollar popular music industry. Li himself would be publicly reviled and would die in persecution during the Cultural Revolution.

From the years of 1949 to 1976 otherwise known as the Maoist Era, the centralization of economic, social and cultural policy around Maoist thought and opinion

\textsuperscript{13}Jones, “Yellow Music,” 79.
marginalized the autonomous development of the arts in Shanghai and indeed throughout the country. Mao Zedong’s published series of talks on art and literature, compiled in 1942 from his musings in the north-western communist stronghold of Yan’an, highlighted the politicization, moralization of music, and the widespread control and monitoring of art. From the pulpit in Yan’an he strongly advocated the role of the artist as an ideological motivator of the masses.

Only truly revolutionary writers and artists can correctly solve the problem of whether to extol or to expose. All the dark forces harming the masses of the people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled; this is the fundamental task of revolutionary writers and artists.14

Mao preached this socialist realism as the reigning philosophy guiding art policies in China, encouraging artists to write, draw, and compose in such a way that reflected positively on socialist industry, culture and economy. After the Communists had successfully established themselves as government of mainland China, and particularly during the Great Leap Forward of 1958-61, they continued to push forward this ideology in cultural policy and to define Chinese culture and music. This propagandistic approach to art was evident in all sectors of the industry, from literature, to music. Although the Great Leap Forward resulted in the deaths of millions of people, it was still one of the greatest periods of musical revival that China had ever seen, though the scope of art was limited by the communist’s push for “socialist realism”.

Kraus posits that: “[t]he Great Leap Forward was concerned with producing large quantities, in the arts as well as Heavy Industries…all this music was intended to inspire an audience of workers to greater production achievements”15. This function of music,

14 Zedong, Mao. Talks at The Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art, Selected Works, 1942.
15 Kraus, “Pianos and Politics in China,” 75.
and of art in general, is key to understanding the reason why the arts underwent such a huge revival during this period of death and starvation. Thus, the Great Leap Forward and subsequently the Cultural Revolution pushed the Chinese to find their national sound, by encouraging workers and artists to defy capitalist nations and to strengthen the economy and the culture. By combining Chinese folk melodies and western music styles (particularly those found in what Kraus defines as the “scientific” Western Classical music), a new form of music was created—one that Communists were quick to denounce as not traditional, but a reflection of the modernization of China. Pieces such as the Butterfly Lovers Concerto were characterized by traditional pentatonic folk melodies composed for the violin soaring over grandiose orchestrations of strings, woodwinds and brass. Indeed, it is a uniquely modern piece, written for orchestra, but maintains a distinctly Chinese approach to melody and resolution. Why did the Communists use western music and folk melody as a starting point for their national sound? On one hand, the influence of Confucian culture and ideology needed to be destroyed, yet on the other, the influence of Confucian culture was so deep that it shaped the responses to itself. In this way, Confucian music could be appreciated, and used within the context of the “national sound”.

Post-Maoist Art in China: the 1980’s

The end of the Maoist legacy and the beginning of the Dengist Reforms in 1978 indicated that art should “entertain instead of uplift.”¹⁶ Dengist reforms eventually allowed Jazz to reenter China in early 1980, although I have yet discover an actual record

¹⁶ Kraus, “Pianos and Politics in China,” 205.
of when the ban was formally lifted. Even so, Kraus discusses cultural arts policies in China as more of a shifting than a changing; “intellectuals, including artists, have an obligation to become teachers to society, to use their skills to rectify social and political ills. This tradition never died in twentieth-century China.”

Kraus highlights the “bittersweet loss of politics” as a shift in rewards and punishments for artists over the next ten or so years. “Artists of propaganda paintings, recognized as a distinct genre during the Maoist period, may also regret the reform era’s disinterest in their work.” For the most part, during the 1980s artists were confused by this shift in government focus mainly because the then-current generation of artists had very little experience creating, performing or writing anything outside the purview of socialist realism. Attempts by young artists to expand their pursuits in a commercial direction were often criticized because of the socialist mores of the older generation of artists. Quickly, though, the Chinese artistic community began to expand their conceptual views on the greater goals of art to include commodification, resulting in further confusion regarding how to adjust their artistic visions to the incentives provided by the burgeoning market economy. Kraus cites the expanding economy’s destruction of the cultural infrastructure combined with the lack of market know-how and previous access to wealth by artists as causes of such a radical change in the aesthetics of art. Jerome Silbergeld’s biography of one painter catalogues amazement at the discovery that his

18 Ibid., 204.
paintings could be priced based on size.19 “By the end of the 1980s, calligraphers were making as much as US $100 per piece of calligraphy.”20

Yet, the rapid development of commercially-focused art was simultaneously accompanied by a development of art that was strongly political. During months before the Tiananmen Massacre, a young Rock musician and former Central Conservatory Trumpet major named Cui Jian, largely considered today as the “Godfather of Chinese Rock”, became a figurehead of the young pro-democracy movement. The album cover featuring Cui Jian’s galvanizing song “Nothing to My Name” (一无所有) prominently displayed his youthful caricature sporting rebellious long hair and a denim jacket, eyes covered by a red bandana and his trumpet raised to his lips. The lyrics portrayed a young teenager who begs a girl to have sex with him, listing all the reasons why she has rejected him up to this point. On this level, the fantastic sexuality of the song spoke directly to young Chinese males who, until recently, had lived in a highly asexualized society. On another level, however, the lyrics of “Nothing to My Name” spoke directly to Communist Party leadership on behalf of these same young Chinese males, pleading them to stop ignoring the desires of the people.

The Tiananmen Massacre of 1989 was as much a message for Chinese artists as it was to pro-democracy activists. In many ways, it clarified the Communist Party’s commitment to maintain some semblance of control over culture because of the “spiritual pollution” that had entered Chinese society via art mediums: pornography, blatant violations of cultural artistic traditions and worst of all, political dissent. Cui Jian was

banned from performing in China for the next 10 years and his records were pulled from store shelves.

More importantly, the Tiananmen Massacre was the beginning of the separation of Shanghai and Beijing arts aesthetics. Avoiding the decentralization of power that had accompanied liberalization of the economy was now the number one focus of the central government in Beijing. While it began to focus on reining in corruption and other problems resulting from political and economic decentralization, Shanghai continued forward in economic growth. The subsequent rise of the Shanghai-based Jiang Zemin to the party leadership in Beijing following the 1989 incident further emphasized this division between the Beijing Dengists and Jiang’s cohorts in the cabinet, known as the “Shanghai Clique”. These two general political views would have a profound influence on art in China.
Chapter 3: Jazz in Shanghai

The Shanghai Jazz Aesthetic

If one word can sum up the Shanghainese Jazz scene, it is “industry”. The Shanghai Jazz scene is an extremely profitable market, with a strong demand for the music and image, and an equally strong influx of marketable talent. Perhaps this is not surprising, considering Shanghai’s history of modernity and global prosperity. In many ways, how the Shanghainese perceive this key historical aspect of their city has informed how they define economic success in the modern age. In other words, the historic notion of old Shanghai plays a huge role in defining the parameters around economic and cultural development in new Shanghai. In music as well, the notion of Shanghai as a former center of Jazz has created a market that associates the historical notion of class culture with the music. That is, music may or may not be the central focus of the venue: clubs market this highly-tailored culture of class that emphasizes wealth, lavish decoration, and expensive liquors—common aesthetic associations with Jazz music. The Jazz clubs of Shanghai are opulently designed: the JZ Club is trimmed in red velvet and features both a second story balcony for additional plush seating for VIP members, as well as an outdoor roof-top patio that features a gazebo office where bassist and owner Ren “Lao Ren” Yuqing has his private office. Cuban cigars are available for purchase at the fully stocked bar, where the staff dress in crisp button-down shirts and make drinks with the knowledge and gusto of educated mixologists. Dimly lit lamps of the colonial European variety attempt to play towards the Old Shanghai style that venues so subtly associate in architecture and design.
The Shanghai clubs also tend to focus on one particular sub-genre of the Jazz market: Blues, R&B, Standard Bebop—genres that can be associated with other aesthetics far more easily than the overarching trope of Jazz music. In this way, Jazz music is marketable, in that it is (ironically) predictable and easy to package with associated material benefits such as expensive liquor, tobacco products, and a culture of class. Indeed, as one Shanghai-based American trumpet player indicated, the venues that support more creative music often paid less, while the more “soul-sucking” clubs tended to pay better. “Soul-sucking” he clarified, meant that these clubs actively forced specific cultural tropes onto musicians, that included defining their style of dress, and rigid adherence to easily accessible styles of music played.

What factors contribute to the creation of this aesthetic? A few approaches are necessary for the fullest analysis of Jazz music in Shanghai. The first is sociological: the musicians and the audiences. Musicians are one focus of the Shanghai Jazz scene, but they do not constitute the entire “Jazz product”. Venues determine the most effective marketing strategy to reach target audiences, creating conformity among musicians towards that marketing image, and delivering the finished product to the audience. The second is the economics of Shanghai: How does the Shanghai economy affect the growth of Jazz music? How much money do Jazz musicians make? Where does funding for Jazz events come from? Finally, Shanghai local politics may be important in forming its Jazz aesthetic: What kinds of local government policies exist towards Jazz musicians? How do Jazz musicians react to these policies? I will discuss this section further on in the paper because of its complexity.

21 “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
The Shanghai Economic Powerhouse

Shanghai is “The Paris of the East”, one CCTV website gushes. While the comparison seems to highlight China’s continuing efforts to emulate western cultural icons, this metaphor may not be so extreme. Paris is largely considered the city where Jazz first took roots in Europe—and Shanghai, in China. As a center of modernity, fashion and artistic growth, the “Paris” metaphor seems to be appropriate for expressing Shanghai’s Jazz development. These cultural associations are a direct result of expansive economic growth.

In order to understand why the demand for Jazz music is so powerful in Shanghai, it is necessary to get a better grasp of the economic context of Shanghai’s prosperity and rapid expansion. The Shanghai Municipal government has primarily focused on financial expansion through the entirety of the city’s relatively short history, beginning with the influx of foreign trade after the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, effectively ending the First Opium War. During this period, Western imperial powers turned Shanghai into an international settlement, where it served as a trade hub between the East and West. Throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution, Shanghai continued to be an area of high economic growth, and after economic liberalization of the country, it exploded with foreign investment and commerce.

In 2011, Shanghai’s total GDP reached 1.92 trillion yuan ($297 billion), and an average GDP per capita of 82,560 yuan ($12,784) indicating an astounding growth rate of

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10.9%\textsuperscript{23}. This has had a positive effect on the growth of city culture. The intricacies of expansive marketing and economic development have created a city life replete with the luxurious and grand. Towering skyscrapers dot the horizon and western fashion outlets and eateries line the streets of Pudong. All one needs to do is walk down Nanjing Road to understand the kind of economic power that has been invested in Shanghai: some of the world’s largest malls sit along the side of the four-lane road, and the lobbies of some sprawling financial complexes stand taller than most three story buildings. The increased presence of globalized and westernized culture and trends highlights the fact that the culture of Shanghai reflects a collective material wealth largely not available to the rest of China.

The rapid expansion of the Shanghai Jazz economy indicates the success of this aesthetically-accessible market. The average musician fee per head for a weekend night at a club, for both Chinese and most foreign musicians, was 600-900 RMB (USD 100-120) and 1500 RMB (USD 230) for one-time “event gigs” such as weddings, social and corporate events. Quite surprisingly, compensation in Shanghai is comparable to that of a weekend night at most New York mid-town establishments. As noted earlier, Shanghai musicians were able to group together and decide on informal “price floors” for nightly fees.

\textsuperscript{23} Cao Xiaqian. Shanghai’s GDP Per Capital Rises Over Beijing’s (Shanghai renju GDP chao Beijing wanquan zuigao). \textit{DFdaily.net}. 20 January /2012
The Sociology of the Shanghai Jazz Scene

Musicians

The Shanghai Jazz scene also reflects the vast globalized underpinnings of Shanghai society. Of most performing bands surveyed in Shanghai, the number of well-known Chinese musicians dwindles to a handful, in comparison with the swelling ranks of overseas Jazz musicians who have traveled there to perform. The local Chinese Jazz musicians include pianists Huang Jianyi and Jin Fo, as well as trumpet player Toby Mak and bassist Ren Yuqing, owner of the JZ Club. For most of these musicians, their initial attraction to Jazz music began later in life. Huang Jian Yi, is largely considered the “Godfather of Chinese Jazz”.

“I was 24 before I first heard any jazz. My roommate at the Conservatory was also a pianist and he played me this tape of "Take The A Train" (Duke Ellington's signature tune). I was immediately hooked. I just couldn't see how these musicians worked together. How did they know when to start and stop? It was amazing.”

Most of these domestic Shanghainese musicians cite the creative, expressive, and liberating nature of improvisation as their first impressions of Jazz music, a direct response to the inflexibility of the Western Classical performance methods at the Shanghai Conservatory.

As a native-born Shanghainese and one of the first Chinese Jazz musicians in Shanghai, Huang has had the experience of watching the fast-paced development of the Jazz scene:

Around 1999 I formed a band called Footprints, which was one of the first, real Shanghai jazz bands… Back then it was hard to make money as a musician. There was nowhere to play and there were very few

bands…today Shanghai is a place where you can make a living as a musician. There are lots of opportunities and jazz musicians from Beijing are moving here to be part of it.  

Still, Chinese domestic musicians are a minority in comparison to the quickly-expanding numbers of foreign musicians in Shanghai, many of whom reside or spend long terms in the city varying anywhere from several months to several years. These musicians most often spend time working “contracts” with clubs, negotiated directly or through intermediary talent agencies. Contracts generally last from one month to half a year, with the working hours, pay and any other terms of the agreement pre-negotiated upon signing. Musicians generally work for five to six nights a week at the clubs where they are “assigned”, playing with groups that are assembled by the agencies. Often these musicians are younger college graduates or working musicians who are not well established in the United States. Among them is a group of graduates from Oberlin College and Conservatory who have risen in prestige and fame since their exodus, beginning in 2000.

In recent years, a number of heavy-weight legendary American musicians have traveled there for performances at the JZ Jazz Festival. This indicates that the Shanghai Jazz scene is funded enough to support the growing demand for American Jazz music at the highest end.

**Audiences**

The Shanghai Jazz music audiences’ tastes, culture and views both shape and conform to the marketing of Shanghai Jazz clubs. In recent years, the Jazz music market demand has shifted from foreigners toward the domestic Shanghainese population. The

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25Ibid.
Shanghai scene is driven by “the desire to be perceived by peers as a sophisticated person,” according JQ Whitcomb, Oberlin alumnus and former trumpet player for the house band at the House of Jazz and Blues in Shanghai. Nevertheless, when discussing the ratio of Chinese audience members to foreigners, “much of the time it was close to 50-50 (foreigner-to-Chinese ratio) at (the) JZ [Club]. Other places have different marketing programs and target markets,” he said. During my short time in Shanghai, it was clear to me that while the audience viewed the music as part of a culture of class, they were also searching for music with which they could identify. “Dream of The Red Chamber” a piece I wrote and played, which combines a traditional Chinese melody with elements of modern gospel, resonated deeply with Shanghai audiences. During more traditional Jazz pieces, the amount of chatter between audience members increased, and during pieces like Dream of The Red Chamber that strove to combine Chinese elements and Western musical elements together, the audience was most attentive and receptive. One audience member was so excited about Dream of The Red Chamber that he asked for a recording and a signature from each of the musicians.

Venues

Shanghai has several prominent Jazz establishments. The first is the Cigars, Jazz, Wine club chain, otherwise known as CJW. CJW markets a highly-tailored aesthetic offering that focuses on a marketable aesthetic package: the sophisticated décor and high end services, combined with the emphasis on 1960’s Bebop-era tunes, otherwise known as Jazz standards. CJW has opened venues in Shanghai, the neighboring city of Hangzhou, and Shenzhen, as well as a failed franchise in Beijing, of which more anon.

26 “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
The JZ Club was established by bassist Ren Yuqing, affectionately known to his friends as Lao Ren, as a response to the growing demand for high-end Jazz music. Most musicians view the JZ club as a more liberating venue, one that places fewer constraints on the music. The JZ Club began as a venture by Lao Ren and several of his friends, to create a space where more creative music could thrive in Shanghai\textsuperscript{27}. “It was started by a few musicians who wanted to make a venue that was really supporting the scene, a place that musicians would feel at home and also would have different music each night of the week”\textsuperscript{28}. Lao-ren carefully opened several more venues over the next few years, including a JZ Club in Hangzhou, and the Shanghai Wooden Box Café, a venue for small group performances. Lao-ren’s most prestigious jewel in his crown, however, was the creation of the JZ Festival. By bringing several legal counselors, businessman and music industry professionals into his visionary circle, Lao-ren quickly expanded his one club act into a hodge-podge franchise that set the stage for the JZ Festival, a multimillion dollar operation that brought the likes of well-known musicians McCoy Tyner, Roy Hargrove, Kenny Garrett, and Eric Truffaz to Shanghainese audiences\textsuperscript{29}.

Essentially, the Shanghai Jazz scene is characterized by the industrial nature of its clubs, musicians and audiences: the scene is well received by audience members, other musicians, and is extremely profitable. Musicians make a lucrative living off of playing standard Jazz, a music that is packaged with a culture of opulence that makes it extremely palatable for audience consumption.

\textsuperscript{27} “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
Chapter 4: Jazz in Beijing

The Beijing Jazz Aesthetic

If the Shanghai Jazz scene can be related to the term “industry”, then the Beijing Jazz scene includes some such elements but is distinctive for its “underground” flavor, a counter-culture that develops from the lack of institutional structures that influence the music, and from the diversity and range of converging styles and influences on the nightly music scene. On one hand, hotels such as the Westin Grand or the Hyatt continue to employ both domestic and foreign musicians to play “Standard Jazz” six nights a week, behind a foreign singer. On the other, a rich counter-culture of Jazz music also exists in Beijing, where the genre is far less defined: these venues play host to groups that play vastly different stylistic, methodological and philosophical approaches to Jazz, an aspect that I will explore later in this chapter. While the elusive and post-modern nature of Jazz music in Beijing avoids falling under the traditional Western definition of Jazz music, it is clear that compared to Shanghai, there are fewer idiomatic or economic constraints surrounding those Beijing musicians who are engaged in a struggle to define their music as uniquely Chinese. The perceived lack of boundaries between domestic and foreign musicians is one factor in explaining the murky origins of the Beijing Jazz pastiche. On any given night at the East Shore Jazz Café, one would find multiple nationalities represented on stage. On Friday nights, local musicians Xia Jia and Zhang Ke are joined by Japanese drummer Izumi Koga. On Sundays, Italian pianist and fashion model Moreno Donadel performs with bassist Da Zhong and drummer Wu “Bei Bei” Yongheng. Tuesday nights at Jiang Hu Bar bring a smorgasbord of musicians from the
United States, Europe, Africa, and China together for a Jam session. While the Bebop vocabulary may not be a common language among all these Jazz musicians, the number of Beijing musicians who have studied American Jazz music history as canon in recent years has grown substantially. This comparative ideological balance has pushed musicians towards developing their own music tastes.

The use traditional Chinese music combined with hip-hop, free Jazz\(^{30}\), Gospel, R&B, and even Western Classical music represent the growing “experimental” culture that moves beyond just the traditional Jazz narrative.

*The Sociology of Jazz in Beijing*

*Musicians*

As a result, the Beijing Jazz scene very much emulates the diversity of musical offerings in a place like New York, where the term Jazz music has spawned a host of unique sub-genres that blend multiple styles together. Among the majority of musicians that I have come to know in Beijing, there seems to be the prevailing view that breaching conventional genre styles is an important aspect of becoming a well-rounded musician. “Over the past years, I’ve been working hard to develop a style of music that is uniquely Chinese”, Xia Jia indicated\(^{31}\). “But to do that, I’ve realized that I have to expand my musical repertoire to include as many different styles and technical approaches as possible.” As such, Jazz musicians often take jobs playing other styles of music in order to make ends meet: Classical orchestras, solo piano performances, even Rock and pop

\(^{30}\) Free Jazz or Avante Garde was a musical movement pioneered by artists such as Albert Ayler, Sun Ra and Charles Mingus. The idea was to eliminate the fixed structure of Jazz music through spontaneous improvisation without chord changes, set rhythms, or delineated formal structures.

\(^{31}\) “Interview, Xia Jia, 2/24/2011.”
music. Through my discussions with Xia Jia, I began to understand that this focus on building new music out of different, contrasting styles was deeply rooted in his musical background.

“I first became interested in Jazz as a teenager—I was fourteen. I started as a Classical musician. The first time I heard Jazz, a friend invited me over to his house, where he had a lot of video tapes. The first was Oscar Peterson and two other musicians playing 3 grand pianos with a rhythm section, and the other video was of Joe Henderson,” said Pianist Xia Jia, when asked about where he developed his appreciation for Jazz music. “It was so cool that they were being so free with their playing—the reliance on group interplay and unpredictable improvisation”\textsuperscript{32}. Xia Jia attended the Peking Conservatory through college, where he studied conducting. His exposure to Jazz music, though, set him on a different route—in his third year, he dropped out of the conducting department to study Jazz piano. In 1999 Xia Jia was invited to participate in the Eastman School’s Jazz program, in Rochester, New York, where he studied with American Jazz legend and pianist Harold Danko. Upon returning to Beijing, in 2004, Xia began a career that would take him down musical paths never before traveled in China.

On a cold, winter night in Beijing, I had the fortune of finding him playing with his trio at the East Shore Jazz Café. The trio delved into a diverse set-list, beginning with “Little Cabbage”, an original composition that delved into a serious postmodern interplay between rhythm and harmony. Little Cabbage was written in a mixed-meter, combining both floating harmonic major harmony, Xia’s uniquely off-beat, cell-based phrasing structure and a light brush-based 4/4 groove on the drum set that gave the song a highly impressionistic feeling. I was surprised to learn that Little Cabbage actually employed the

\textsuperscript{32}“Interview, Xia Jia, 1/17/2011.”
titular traditional Chinese folk song as its melody. Immediately afterwards, the trio launched into a take of Darn That Dream, a beautiful ballad written by Jimmy van Heusen. Xia’s technically impeccable and “clean” piano approach gave the song a neo-traditional feel that harked back to Bill Evans. The highlight of the set was a modern reinterpretation of a Scriabin piano concerto, rewritten for the piano trio. Xia had been practicing the original solo piano piece for a performance in Hangzhou, and had decided to arrange it for his trio as a mnemonic device to help him remember the flow of the music. While this kind of diversity in a set list is not directly representative of all the music nor skill level of all musicians in Beijing, it offers a representative window into understanding the kind of influences that go into creating a unique approach to Beijing’s music scene.

Wu “Bei Bei” Yongheng, a Beijing-based drummer, can be found in front of crowds of ten thousand or more on weekends, playing Rock music, but every Wednesday night, he sits at the drum set in East Shore Jazz Café with his group, the Bei Bei Quartet. “We’ve been trying to master the standards, but also to branch out into different music that we all enjoy playing,” Wu said in a December 2012 interview. In the summer of 2011, I had the chance to tour with Wu, Xia Jia, and bassist Zhang Ke. The tour gave me an unmarred picture of the passionate but hectic lives of Jazz musicians in China. As diverse musicians, Wu, Xia, and guitarist Liu Yue are primary of examples of Jazz musicians who have gained fame in other areas: these three musicians are primarily known to Chinese audiences as the rhythm section (drums, bass, piano) of prominent Rock musician and activist Cui Jian. My chance to tour with Bei Bei and Xia Jia revealed many idiosyncrasies of life as a Chinese Jazz musician. For one, performing and playing

33 “Interview, Wu Yongheng, 1/18/2011.”
music that extended outside of the realm of Jazz music was a means of economic support. Conversely, the Beijing musicians were not afraid to use their fame in other genres of music as a platform to publicize and spread their appreciation of Jazz music. At the Third Annual Shanxi Percussion Competition in Taigu, where Wu was asked to perform and play as a guest artist, he insisted on playing more liberal Jazz arrangements, including some of our original music. Among these were contemporary pieces written by Oberlin musicians, as well as elements of free-jazz improvisation. The level to which Chinese audiences received the blending of Jazz, Chinese folk, Gospel and R&B elements and non-traditional harmony within the tunes was astounding—Wu was one of the most widely-approached artists at the following awards gala.

Nathaniel Gao moved to Beijing in 2005, following a short period of Chinese study. Gao, an alto player of half-Chinese descent, studied Jazz saxophone at the University of Northern Iowa from 2001 to 2004. He cited the community and the experimental nature of the music as a few of the factors that enticed him to move to Beijing after studying Chinese, there. I met Gao in 2009 at the East Shore Jazz Club (which I will discuss later). At the outset of my stay in China, I had low expectations from the Beijing arts scene, and even lower expectations from anything labeled “Jazz”. Meeting Nathaniel, the musicians he worked with, and hearing them play convinced me that the Beijing Jazz scene truly did have something to contribute to the world of Jazz music. Since he had moved to China, Gao had spent significant time teaching and performing— as well as building relationships with venues and partners that would lead the Jazz scene and pique my interest in the development of Jazz in China. For the summer of 2009, Gao introduced me to many of the central musicians in the Beijing Jazz
scene, including Xia Jia, Bei Bei, Zhang Ke, Liu Yue, Huang Yong, Izumi Koga, and Liu Yuan. He also introduced me to New York-based vocalist and musician Jen Shyu. Shyu revealed that the purpose of her stay in Beijing was to study traditional Chinese spoken word (说唱) singing, and that she was attempting to incorporate elements of shuo-chang into her own post-tonally-influenced music. Many of the local musicians in Beijing cite Gao as a key influence on the development of some of the key establishments and infrastructures that allow Jazz musicians to perform and play their art: “Jiang Hu Bar, where we host the weekly Tuesday night Jam session, is a place where all musicians come to play, experiment, and learn,” said Xia Jia. “Originally, it started as a place where underground Rock and folk small acts would play, but Nathaniel offered to run a weekly session there, for no pay except for a few free drinks. Now, it’s one of the most talked-about venues in Beijing!”

Indeed, on Tuesday nights at Jiang Hu, the crowd is full of young and old Chinese students, musicians and listeners, as well as a whole host of foreigners: Sunny Da Da, a practitioner of traditional African drums, drummers Alex Morris and Jimmy Biala, tenor sideman Adam Kielman and guitarist Dan Brustman. The bricolage of musical backgrounds, styles and influences in the music reflects the plethora of diversity in the crowd.

34 The term “Underground” originates in the sense of counter-culture, as opposed to counter-political. While underground music may have certain political leanings, those views are either referenced sub-rosa or remain unexpressed. In this way, the music remains within the fringe of legality.
35 “Interview, Xia Jia, 1/14/2011.”
Venues

Nevin Domer, a former Fulbright scholar and Maryland native, has been working as a manager for Maybe Mars, a relatively young independent label based in Beijing. As one of the few foreigners with privilege of working so closely with these Chinese groups, Domer revealed that foreign publications, companies and arts critics such as Converse and The New York Times tend to focus on and funnel money towards the experimental groups who push the boundaries, creating a race to become the definers of new genres. “We are trying to promote the Chinese scene in general and the bands we find especially interesting within the scene in particular…We want to promote these bands and this music-community both inside China – our main goal – and abroad.\textsuperscript{36}

Twenty minutes from the downtown offices of Maybe Mars, located in the neon-lit Hou Hai rear-bar district, lies the East Shore Jazz Café. East Shore is tucked away inside a two-story concrete dwelling that overlooks the man-made lake. The interior is sparsely decorated, the floors and bar made of black-painted oak and the walls draped in black curtains. Two small television screens continuously blare the same Jazz-themed movies from night to night. During the day, the café closes for all but a few customers. At night, however, the space transforms into a bustling club, and sets often last till the wee hours of the morning, draped in heavy cigarette smoke. Almost every night of the week, one can find a different group performing Jazz music, from standards to original arrangements. I frequently found myself onstage at Jam sessions, with the likes of Xia Jia, as well as superstars such as Yannick Rieu and Antonio Hart.

Five minutes south of East Shore, along the Bell Tower district, lies Jiang Hu Bar, a largely-preserved courtyard house that has been converted into a bar and a performance

\textsuperscript{36} Nevin Domer (personal communication, December 15, 2011)
space. The stone floors and open roof have all been preserved and the living quarters have been converted into a stage and wooden hand-carved sofas from which casual listeners might engage in table-top soccer. Jiang Hu owner Tian Xiao prides himself in bringing the best of Beijing’s developing underground talent to the small stage. Most interestingly, Jiang Hu Bar has developed a reputation among young Beijing clientele as one of the most popular bars to hear new and progressive music. During sets, young artists take hundreds of pictures, there is little talking in the performance space, and audience members listen intensely to the music. In comparison with spaces like the Shanghai-based CJW, where the music seems to be a competing focus with the social atmosphere of the club, in Beijing venues like Jiang Hu, music does not carry the same class-culture attachments as its Shanghainese counterparts: Chinese and foreigners, young and old, share equal candor and interest towards is performing on the stage.

Audiences

“Most of the people who come to my venue are Chinese citizens,” said Tian Xiao, when asked about the ratio of foreigners to Chinese at Jiang Hu Bar. The close ties between Beijing’s musician community and the rest of the arts community create a unique feedback loop: artists of one medium or genre often appear at shows, openings, and performances of others. Located just west of the Central Academy of Drama, Tian Xiao declared it “not uncommon” to find the likes of world-famous Chinese actress Zhou Xun perusing the tattered magazines at Jiang Hu. This relationship among artists often leads to collaboration on new levels. “One of the things I’m trying to work on right now, is a full package of visual, audio and tactile experiences with my music. I’ve got a guy
doing beats, and a guy doing graffiti at the same time,” writes Jewel Fortenberry, a Beijing-based pianist and Oberlin graduate. Combining visual art with an original electronic-based sonic palette, funk roots, and a hands-on collaborative art-scheme is one of Jewell’s future dream projects for his quartet, Fresh Element.

These kinds of connections have also helped cement the relationship between Jazz musicians and Rock musicians, particularly between Cui Jian and his Jazz-musician rhythm section. Most nights, Xia Jia, Bei Bei, Liu Yuan and Liu Yue find themselves split between playing at Jazz venues in Beijing and at large stadium venues across China. In the summer of 2012, Cui Jian and his Rhythm Dogs will make a US tour. An opening for a new club in the Sanlitun Village district found my sextet performing for Cui Jian, who had stopped in to see the live music.

Henry Zhang saw the need for musicians to expand their audiences beyond the artist community. Zhang, a Vice President of investment banking at Barclay’s Capital in Hong Kong, represents a second type of important audience member—the patron. At the end of my 2009 summer study in Beijing, Zhang offered me $6,000 to bring a sextet back to Beijing. For Zhang, bringing new musicians was the key to better developing a wider Jazz audience and economy. For the next three years, I brought three different groups from Oberlin Conservatory, to and from Beijing, funded through grants from the College, and supplemented with funding from Zhang. These local patrons often frequent Beijing’s Jazz establishments, and become friendly with the local musicians.

37 “Interview: Jewell Fortenberry, 1/15/2012.”
**Economics**

The Beijing Jazz market reaches far deeper into the country’s political and cultural legacy than the numbers reveal. The average fee per night at the best Jazz clubs pay no more than 300 RMB per person, and yet, a steady following among Beijing musicians has developed over the years. While hotels and talent agencies in Beijing frequently call on many Beijing-based Jazz musicians to play at corporate gigs and late nights at upper-floor bars, most domestic Chinese musicians won’t be found at these establishments, because of the blatant difference in pay between Chinese and foreign musicians. Instead, they teach privately at institutions like the Contemporary Music Institute or the Peking Conservatory, and perform in the house bands at weekly jam sessions. A handful of well-known musicians will perform at large venue concerts as solo acts, or headline with musicians of other genres, such as Rock-stars Cui Jian and Dou Wei. At many of the small venues, nightly fees range anywhere from free drinks to 400 RMB per musician. At hotels, contracts are awarded, depending on the background of the musician, and the skill level: foreigners are often awarded contracts as high as 28,000 RMB a month and domestic Chinese musicians may be offered as a contract as low as 300 RMB a night. Single-paying corporate gigs often pay as high as 8500 RMB per musician per event and large venue concerts, depending on the scope of the venue and concert, may range from 1,000-10,000 RMB.

Essentially, the Beijing Jazz scene is characterized by its underground nature—music that is countercultural. It represents many unique styles and endeavors by musicians to diversify it. Clubs and venues also reflect this dynamic, programming musicians who play postmodern music that blends styles and traditions. While musicians

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38 Allie Webb (personal communication, 11/14/2011)
make less in China, they enjoy considerably more freedom to innovate and create new music.
Chapter 5: The Politics of Jazz in China

Richard Kraus discusses the impacts of modernization and liberalization of economy on art, in the people’s republic of China. He explores the relationships between “arts materials” and state politics. He argues that “Chinese artists are struggling not only for freedom, but also for professional status,” implying that the prevalence of government institutions supporting art also play a role in the latter consideration.

Furthermore, he discusses the notion that:

“Artists will be often torn between evaluation criteria determined by the artist themselves and their aesthetic technique and standards from outside arts world, typically financial success…China’s artists have also long had an additional eternal criterion for evaluation: the measure of politics.”

This framework emphasizes the top-down aspect of political influence on arts and cultural development: the direct impact of bureaucracy on musical development, particularly with regard to regulation and support of the government.

Secondly, Kraus argues that the concept of “art for arts sake” is limited, in China but “art for nation’s sake would still sound right to many individuals,” as the result of the aforementioned long and complex history of politicization of music. This opposing framework emphasizes the bottom-up aspect of political influence on art; the impact of nationalist and patriotic tendencies by artists on the aesthetic forms of their music. How these two opposing frameworks come together in their respective cities defines the politics of Jazz music in each respective city.

40 Ibid. 204
41 Ibid. 204
The politics of Chinese art are far more convoluted and tangled than the other dimensions of defining Jazz music in Beijing and Shanghai. Examining the similarities and subtle differences between the politics of Jazz music in both cities will explicate yet another piece of the puzzle that goes into explaining the nuanced differences in the development of distinct Jazz scenes and their resulting aesthetics in these cities.

Jazz music in both Beijing and Shanghai is undoubtedly influenced by the politics of the Chinese state, but does not necessarily carry a “political” message. In other words, the policies of the Chinese government strongly affect the sound of the music or the physical manifestation of the cultural associations of the music, but the resulting aesthetic output may not have any kind of overt political message. Additionally, politics plays a regulatory role in defining Chinese culture across both these cities: there must be some implicit government consent in order for Jazz music or any other art form, for that matter, to maintain an audience. The third similarity lies in the role of nationalism as an audience-based form of political influence on Jazz music: Chinese audiences tend to get more excited about Chinese performers as a form of competition with foreign artists, creating a feedback loop in which Chinese musicians may try to reinvent Jazz music in the Chinese style.

The major difference between the jazz scenes and aesthetics of Shanghai and Beijing are influenced by the alternative political leanings (or lack thereof) of their respective Chinese musicians. In different cities, the ratio of domestic musicians, who have strong political motivations for playing Jazz music, to foreign musicians, who tend to focus on financial stability, affect the economic development of the Jazz scene and the resulting aesthetic.
Two Opposites: Classical and Rock Music

As Jazz music is a murky art form that spans both the promotable, but also countercultural aspects of music in both Shanghai and Beijing, analyzing the attitude of local government policy towards Jazz music requires observing policy towards the opposite ends of this cultural spectrum. On one hand, the central government is clearly interested in promoting Western Classical music, evident in the growing presence of Chinese within the small elite of well-known Classical musicians across the world. This push reflects the self-elevating political agenda of the Community party to nurture the Chinese reputation in the arts, as well as military and economics, to a competitive level in the global community. On the other hand, the central government treats anti-political and counter cultural music with extreme prejudice. Rock music, in particular, the kind that has developed at the huge stadiums where young Chinese men and women crowd around each other in “unruly” fashion, is one of the most closely scrutinized and monitored forms of culture in China. Li Peng, the lead vocalist for Reflector, a grunge-punk band that developed in the wake of the 90s, talked about constant visits from police, and MOC officials. These officials would often demand lyrics to works in progress, and frequently subject him to drug tests. I spoke with Li Peng a day after he had been released from fifteen days of jail for failing one such drug test.

In Shanghai and Beijing, Jazz music falls on different places in this continuum of promotable versus underground culture. I will argue that in Shanghai, Jazz music is treated much closer to the promotable end of the spectrum where Classical music lies,

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because of their close historical links, while in Beijing, Jazz music is treated much closer to underground music because of its proximity to Rock music, especially in terms of the musicians who play both.

**Jazz Politics Shanghai**

In the politics of Jazz music in Shanghai, clearly the state politics influences the development of Jazz music, but that does not necessarily entail the creation of a unique political identity for Jazz musicians. For example, the musicians in Shanghai generally focus on economic stability, which often involves them in political endeavors that may promote Jazz in the Shanghainese political environment. As we have demonstrated in the Shanghai Jazz scene, the musicians there are unafraid to lobby for support from the government—to build the Jazz economy and the institutional infrastructure that is needed for an arts economy.

*The Top-Down Politics of Jazz in Shanghai*

**Government Support**

One of the unique conditions surrounding the creation of the Shanghai JZ Jazz festival is the presence of clear government support. The JZ festival’s 2011 website lists the Jing’an District Culture Bureau as a high-level sponsor for the event. Jing’an district is one of the most densely populated of the eight “downtown” Pudong Shanghai districts and plays host to a large number of foreigners. Among all Chinese Jazz musicians run
rumors that Lao Ren had scored favors with the Shanghai municipal government, in the form of financial, material and political support. The exact dollar amount is hard to determine, and accounts vary from person to person. “It’s hard to say, because everything has to be connected to the government somehow to stay open,” Whitcomb indicated. A 2011 Shanghai Jing’an District news article chronicled a smaller Charming Jing’an” 2011 Shanghai Jazz Music Festival Master's Hall celebration follow-up to the JZ Jazz Festival, which had ended just four days prior. Among those in attendance were leaders from the CPC Jing'an District Committee, Jing'an People's Congress, Jing'an District Government and CPPCC Jing'an District Committee, Rashid Lombard, founder of the Cape Town International Jazz Music Festival, as well as the Vice Director of Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture. They were treated to performances from the likes of American Saxophonist Kenny Garrett, the legendary McCoy Tyner, and Grammy-nominated Take 6, an African American acapella group.

The decision by the Jing’an, and by extension, Shanghai municipal government, to support the Jazz industry in Shanghai can be understood through the lens of cultural reform, throughout the Chinese state. “Without the flourishing development of socialist culture, there can be no socialist modernization; the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation must be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture,” the People’s Daily proclaimed, regarding the Third Plenary Meeting of the Standing Politburo, in October of 2011. During the meeting, one of the major topics covered was the consolidation of

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43 “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
controls on Chinese culture: heavier restrictions on censorship of Wei-bo microblogs and TV shows that had overly sexual or “spiritually pollutive” themes.

The purpose of the Jing’an festival was to solidify government support for Jazz music and cultural exchange—to “support the district by the soul of culture…[creating] a cultural brand…representing Jing’an and Shanghai.”

Here, the historical self-interpretation of the Shanghai government may also play an important role in explaining the political narrative surrounding the public sector’s support of the Shanghai Jazz scene. As the only Chinese city in which Jazz music developed co-synchronously with the west, the preservation of its cultural heritage allows the Shanghai municipal government to capitalize on a cosmopolitan western cultural trope and aesthetic, as if it were its own. Wei Wiping argues that:

> The modernization program Shanghai has embarked on since the 1980s involves regenerating a vibrant cosmopolitan culture formed in the early 20th century. Standing for adaptability, popularity, and modernity, this culture offered a contrast of old and new, elite and ordinary, and Chinese and Western. In particular, the city obtained a kind of sophistication with a strong merchant character and commerce served as the primary motor of society. The built environment clearly reflected the commercial nature and Western influence. Today in an era of globalization, the regeneration of this cosmopolitanism takes on primarily place-based strategies aimed at recreating a sense of place, in combination with the cultivation of key cultural industries.

In other words, the support and development of these industries characterizes the Shanghai government’s key strategy of shaping the who and what of local culture to suit their needs.

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46 Anonymous, “Charming Jing’an.”
Government Control

How does the government maintain its desired culture while eliminating culture it regards as negative? As we have seen, the Shanghai government supports art that fits neatly inside its desired cultural image. Yet, the Shanghai Cultural Bureau also runs an oppressively stifling campaign against what it deems to be negative culture: any and all art that exists outside this highly-tailored, commodifiable cultural aesthetic. Unregistered arts communities and performances are disbanded, graffiti treated as a punishable offense\(^{48}\), set lists are checked, rehearsals scrutinized and musicians vetted for drugs and other elicit substances. A 2006 performance by Harry Connick, Jr. saw the entire set list nixed during the final hours before the performance. Logistical reasons were cited for the last-minute change. The intense regulation was due, in no small part, to the then-recent fiasco involving Icelandic singer Bjork, who had performed “Declare Independence”, an unlisted song in her Fudan University set list, and shouted “Tibet! Tibet!” from the stage, afterward. The event prompted the Shanghai Culture Bureau to pass immediate measures regarding the strict regulation of cultural performances, bureau official attendance during rehearsals, as well as ritual screening of musicians and lyrics.

How are we to understand this seemingly contradictory set of policies towards artists and their craft in Shanghai? In many ways, the dominant cultural narrative, as put forward by the Shanghai government, is accompanied by a rigid series of regulations that aim to suppress culture perceived as negative. Jazz music fits into this cultural narrative only because of its apparent value within the government’s revisionist interpretation of the Shanghai’s distinguishing character. According to Wu, Shanghai public support for

all cultural industries (cinema, music, art, architecture) develops from this nostalgic
desire to see Shanghai elevated to the level of a global city.

This future vision [of Shanghai] is no doubt a continuation of the city’s legendary history. As such, the nostalgia for its past economic and cultural glory has been renewed with vengeance, coupled with the ambition to revive a cosmopolitan reputation that Shanghai acquired in its early 20th century golden age and had since lost. 49

**The Bottom-Up Politics of Jazz in Shanghai**

The ways in which audience-based politics affect Jazz music in Shanghai often reflect one major category of political influence: the presence of nationalism among Shanghainese audiences. While Shanghainese audiences tend to gravitate towards music that reflects older, traditional Western cultural norms when listening to Jazz, they also tend to favor Chinese musicians when it comes to competition with Western musicians on the Chinese stage. In other words, Chinese audiences prefer Chinese musicians when compared to Western Jazz musicians.

Generally speaking, both domestic and foreign Shanghai-based musicians are either supportive of the municipal government or have no political leaning. Domestic Chinese musicians, including Lao Ren and Huang Jianyi, have played a major role in lobbying and garnering support from the government for festivals, venues, and cultural support. Foreign Shanghai-based musicians tend to focus primarily on financial stability, spending time in Shanghai to make money and then move back to their respective countries. Their economic focus, often involves political participation that affects the Shanghainese political environment for Jazz music. In observing the “Charming Jing’an”

2011 Shanghai Jazz Music Festival”, the presence of such well-known and respected Western bands at such a politically-motivated event can be explained through the financially-focused lens of Western Jazz musicians: “everything has to be connected to the government somehow, just to stay open,” Whitcomb mentioned—having close ties with the Shanghainese government creates a more prosperous financial environment for Jazz music. This desire for financial stability leads these musicians to play in government-sponsored events with clear political messages.

Clearly, in the political spectrum of approved music to disapproved, Jazz music in Shanghai falls closer to the former. The politics of the Shanghai Jazz scene are characterized by financially-driven motives of the powerful government support lobby that sees Jazz music as a unique and valuable part of the city’s cultural heritage, but also by their equally suppressive regime to eliminate all non-conforming art. Domestic and foreign musicians are primarily focused on financial sustainability, which leads them to seek out the government for support. Finally, the patrons easily buy into the cultural narrative that is presented to them by the government-shaped industry.

**Jazz Politics in Beijing**

The musicians of Beijing’s arts scene are far too diverse in terms of artistic and intellectual pursuits to form any kind of cohesive political lobby. As opposed to the
Shanghai Jazz scene where musicians have received substantial government support, the lack of political lobbying or, perhaps, failure at it also shapes the muddy relationship between Jazz music and other genres.

Nationalism does not even seem to bring all musicians together. While individual musicians such as Xia Jia or Bei Bei may be interested in bringing together a unique “Chinese Jazz” aesthetic, other Chinese musicians may not. The inability of the large contingent of foreign musicians to participate in this uniquely Chinese discourse also complicates matters. Those Chinese musicians who are willing to participate in government functions do so not necessarily in support of the Chinese government but out of populist and nationalist sentiment. As mentioned in earlier the paper regarding the musicians of the Beijing Jazz scene, Xia Jia desires to create a national Chinese Jazz aesthetic that reflects the culture of the Chinese people, their traditions, wants and needs.

Suppression of “negative” culture seems to be the dominating focus of the central government, in Beijing. Whereas in Shanghai, active suppression of cultural activity is accompanied by substantial support of cultural industries that are deemed important to cultural growth, the Beijing Jazz scene receives little support from the city government. Consequently, the musical character of the Beijing scene is spread out over widely different subgenres.

The Top-Down Politics of Jazz in Beijing

In terms of understanding the central government’s views on Jazz music in Beijing, the close relationships between Jazz and Rock musicians might point towards the disapproved end of the spectrum. Yet, Jazz musicians in Beijing are not usually being
harassed, arrested, or monitored to the degree that Rock musicians are. The lack of music that has openly subversive lyrics might account for this.

It is clear that, in contrast to government support in Shanghai, the Beijing central government has generally ignored its Jazz community. Among Beijing’s humanities and arts higher-educations institutions, there is a striking lack of interest with regard to Jazz music. One official of the central Ministry of Culture even went so far as to say that the Beijing government had no real interest or negative attitude towards in Jazz music, as the capital city already had an abundance of “real culture” and a plethora of more pressing cultural issues, than the rebelliousness of Jazz musicians.\(^{50}\)

And yet, Beijing Jazz musicians do feel the effects of support and constriction by the state. Xia Jia discussed an invitation by the Ministry of Culture to a friendly tri-nation competition between China, South Korea, and Japan. Each government was able to nominate one pianist to perform, to showcase their national development of modernity and strength of cultural industries. On the other hand, JQ Whitcomb discussed an instance in which foreign and domestic musicians were being jailed across the country for playing music “illegally”, either at unregistered clubs, or on unregistered tourist visas.\(^{51}\) This was the result of the discovery of hundreds of illegal English teachers.

What is clear is that the work of Chinese Jazz musicians in Beijing is happening largely outside the purview of the central government. Their music, while certainly influenced by exists on the fringes of the limited cultural narrative of the central government. As such, it is able to channel a wide variety of other unique elements and dimensions, including traditional Chinese music, and an entire host of Western artists.

\(^{50}\) “Interview, Anonymous Ministry of Culture Official, 1/13/2012.”

\(^{51}\) “Interview, JQ Whitcomb, 2/11/2012.”
such as Ornette Coleman and Esbjörn Svensson, who expanded their musical visions above and beyond the monolithic American-dominated tradition of Jazz music.

*The Bottom-Up Politics of Jazz in Beijing*

While the primary focus of government, musicians and audiences in Shanghai seems to be the economic development and the class culture associated with developed cultural industries, the views of musicians and audience members of Beijing seem to run the gamut. While some musicians like Xia Jia try to create a national identity for their music, other Jazz musicians are simply interested in pursuing apolitical careers in other genres. Furthermore, other Jazz musicians are interested in producing post modern music that may combine traditional Chinese music, Bebop, Post-Tonal Theory, Avant Garde music, Gospel, Rhythm and Blues, Afro-Cuban music, and Western Classical music. Traditional Chinese music is largely ametric: in traditional spoken-word-singing “notes” are treated as holistic groupings of pitches, rather than the sonorities themselves. As such, applying the traditional Chinese art medium to the Jazz tradition leads to some interesting possibilities regarding the juxtaposition of odd or mixed meter. Some West-African 12/8 drum patterns allow for emphasis of either the 3/8 or the hypermetric 4/4 time signatures, an element that some Chinese musicians use to modify and redevelop traditional Chinese music. Other musicians may focus on freely improvised music as a way to develop a Chinese traditional music into a national Jazz form, relying on thematic and motivic focus as a discourse on the ametric character of traditional Chinese music.

However complex and varying the musical characteristics of music in Beijing may be, politically, musicians are extremely careful to skirt around regulations regarding
acceptable cultural practices. While Jazz musicians and the Shanghai government engage in dialogue over acceptable political messages in their music, Jazz musicians in Beijing avoid writing music that portrays criticisms of the central government, so as not to be labeled as subversive. Some musicians may try their hardest to leave political messages out of their music, altogether, simply because of the potential for trouble; Rock musicians may use double-entendre to imply veiled criticism. For the most part, however “[I] avoid writing music about politics, these days. It’s just too much trouble and I don’t want to keep going to jail,” wrote Li Peng; “I just want to play my own music.”

As a large majority of Beijing Jazz music audiences are young artists or students, one would expect the political culture of these audiences to be overt. While there is a strong underpinning of nationalism among these young people, the perceived openness and lack of experience with avant garde, post modern and non-traditional music creates a sense of openness and curiosity, rather than any kind of strong political culture. In a sense, this does create a broad intellectual basis that infiltrates ideology and political views. While both audiences in Beijing and Shanghai are extremely receptive to music that combines traditional Chinese music with other world elements, Beijing musicians have more freedom to address these interests and audiences there are regularly exposed to non-traditional improvisatory music.

Essentially, the ‘underground’ nature of the Beijing Jazz scene is characterized by a plethora of musical identities and subgenres that reflect an intellectual trend far too diverse to be grouped into a single political identity. As such, the Beijing Jazz scene is also characterized by a lack, or failure of lobbying groups that work in the favor of Jazz musicians. The absence of the government in a supportive role indicates that the relative

52 “Interview, Li Peng, 8/14/2012.”
unimportance of Jazz music to their cultural visions and yet, musicians are asked, when the occasion arises, to perform at government sponsored functions. Finally, musicians are populist in their musical intentions, writing music that they feel is both representative of and challenging for their fans and audiences.
Chapter 6: Jazz with Chinese Characteristics (中国特爵士主义); Conclusions

The disparate nature of aesthetic forms of Jazz music development in Shanghai and Beijing, two unique cities in China, derive from history; regional economics; sociology and politics. Shanghai’s Jazz aesthetic reflects the substantial government support of its cultural industries. It is a city with an extensive history in Jazz music, on which the government is quick to capitalize. As such, the Shanghai municipal government has shaped Jazz music into a commodity – a process that has narrowed the music into what audiences can immediately associate with the glamour, opulence, and aesthetic images of global bourgeois class culture. The symbiotic relationship between the Shanghai government and the city’s Jazz industry has played the largest role in defining the music. Musicians play Jazz standards “like” easily identifiable musicians: Chet Baker, Miles Davis and Charlie Parker. They are legends, no doubt, for their instantly recognizable sound, cultural associations and aesthetic style, precisely what drives these clubs to force musicians to emulate them.

Alternatively, the diversity and complexity of music within the Beijing Jazz scene detaches it from the kind of class associations found with Jazz music in Shanghai. Beijing Jazz artists write music that defies traditional genre classifications by picking and choosing traditional elements of Jazz music and blending them together with other styles of music, or throwing them out all together in favor of post-tonality: “Jazz with Chinese characteristics,” if you will. The Beijing Jazz scene is also characterized by a decided lack of institutional support for Jazz music. Considering the central government’s focus on maintaining political control of the economy, it makes sense that it might ignore
controlling and monitoring more loosely-developed foreign musical practices within the Beijing city limits.

The hegemonic presence of Shanghai’s government dominates the Jazz “space” within Shanghainese society, whereas, in Beijing, the lack of institutional support allows for creativity to flourish. Ironically, while Shanghai has tried put forward its history of Jazz in an effort to court global opinion regarding its unique identity within Chinese society, the Jazz music of Beijing is far more creative, as the lack of institutional supports in place allow for musicians to adjust and create without the confines of financial pressures. Essentially, the creativity of Beijing Jazz is occurring at the very margins of political economy and power. In the way that Li Jinhui hybridized his music through exposure to multiple dominant musical narratives, Beijing musicians are exploring and creating music that does not reflect a singular hegemonic musical or cultural influence.

In other words, within the broader scheme of China’s push for modernization, globalization creates both cooptive and postmodern responses. Sometimes the introduction of culture creates replicas of itself; sometimes it synthesizes with other cultural elements into something completely different. What kinds of economic conditions are required for art to develop beyond the cooptive bonds of hegemony? The politics of Chinese Jazz may reflect a wider truth: while public support of the arts may or may not help them survive, the implications for creativity may be dire. More economic power invested in cultural industries creates incentives for artists to work within dominant aesthetic forms. Conversely, a government with less economic power over artists inadvertently opens more space within the ebb and flow of cultural tides for open forms to develop resistance against hegemonic art aesthetics.
Understanding this dynamic also helps explain the marginal overall development of Jazz music in China. The localization of Jazz music to each city indicates different meaning to different peoples across China, thereby inhibiting unified development as a singular cultural force. Furthermore, the differing levels of focused economic and cultural growth across China have resulted in limited exposure of Jazz music to some Chinese cities. Together, they make Jazz music a regionally-defined phenomenon that develops slowly overall.

**Politics in Art; Art in Politics**

The limited rise of Jazz music in China not only provides a unique perspective into the development of art or global culture, but also a look into the politics of the state. While the continuing hegemony of the American Jazz tradition in China informs the style traits of music in places like Shanghai, it also indicates a far more penetrating form of political hegemony. Traditionally, political scientists have connected liberal market policies with desire for ideological freedoms (*i.e.*, democracy, human rights and civil rights). And yet, while Shanghai is a huge economic force that provides vast material wealth to its people, it has managed to turn this economic power into ideological power. In other words, the ability of the Shanghai government to mold the affinities and tastes of its people is an indicator of a deep-reaching ideological manipulation at play. The communist government’s domestic goals for the future have broadly been understood to include maximizing economic power while minimizing domestic political change. Viewing the dynamics of popular Jazz (and art) aesthetics in Shanghai and Beijing identifies the different levels of success their governments have had in inducing
ideological hegemony over their citizens. Perhaps most importantly, from analyzing the Shanghai/Beijing comparison it would seem that, in order to encourage voluntary acceptance of aesthetics and, finally, ideology, the specific conditions surrounding political hegemony of the state require a carefully calibrated mix of both suppressive and supportive top-down economic and regulatory policies.

In the end, though, one should remember that people are the conduits through which ideology infiltrates society. In the 21st century, it is the musicians who are struggling to construct the Chinese Jazz pastiche out of both traditional elements of Chinese Classical and American Jazz music. Xia Jia reminded me of this, towards the end of my final interview with him. He seemed dissatisfied at the deterministic view of the general cultural and political path that the conversation had been moving down for the previous thirty minutes. Lighting a cigarette, he sat back in the darkness of the East Shore Jazz Café. My three band mates and I anxiously awaited his next words as he blew smoke rings up towards the ceiling, in deep thought. “All of a sudden, he chuckled: “Old Mao was right,” he chortled. “We have had a true revolution. Confucius lives!”
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