



Music & Culture:

Chinese-Western Musical Exchange from the 16th-20th Centuries

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Abstract

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Erwin Felber: A Jewish Music Scholar in Republic Shanghai

Following the *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht* of 1938, about 18,000 Jews, mostly from Germany and Austria, found refuge in Shanghai. In my field research, I found numerous primary sources in China which brought to light Jewish exile Erwin Felber, a music educator and historian, whose music contributions had since eluded the attention of music scholars until now. He was music professor of Shanghai University and artistic director of the European Jewish Artists Society in Shanghai. Yet we know very little about him. This paper, therefore, seeks to explore his musical background and his many contributions that included Western and non-Western music articles he wrote for the *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle*, the only newspaper allowed by Japanese authority to continue publication through the ghetto era; the ethnomusicology course he taught at the Asia Seminar; and during the ghetto period (1943-45), his political writing on music that helped to restore a sense of pride to Chinese citizens and Jewish refugees alike in response to Japanese hegemony. His writings in both German and English were well known in the Shanghai Jewish community. Thus Felber's music essays were significant not only from an edification stance but they also challenged Jewish refugees to look beyond their sense of cultural identity amidst a diverse culture that characterized Shanghai during the Republican era.