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## **Retired Chinese Workers, Musical Education, and Participant-Observation in The Beijing Sunshine Wind Band Art Troupe**

The Beijing Sunshine Wind Band performs in community concerts in Beijing year round. The band began in 2007, founded by Lin Yi and her husband Zhao Yinglin. Lin Yi underwent cancer surgery in 1995 and recovered to form the band of around 100 retirees. Members begin musical training in retirement, and as adult learners practice hours gaining musical proficiency. The music is Chinese and in *jianpu* numerical notation, but all of their instruments are Western woodwinds, brass, and percussion. The band performs at national events, museums and libraries, and toured Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Macau.

Concert bands are civilian versions of military bands. Their marches include “The People’s Liberation Army March,” and lyrical songs such as “My Country” from a 1956 film. Their performances draw revolutionary sentiments in suites such as *The Red Detachment of Women*, and the band performs songs from post-Mao decades, such as “Dare to Ask the Way,” from the television series *Journey to the West*. Trevor Herbert stated that concert bands serve communities as “rational recreation.” The goal of this article is show how a Chinese national concert band reached and created healthy lifestyles for retired workers recovering from cancer and other disabilities.

## **Китайские пенсионеры, музыкальное образование и наблюдение за участниками в художественной труппе Beijing Sunshine Wind Band [Пекинского духового ансамбля «Солнечный свет»]**

Beijing Sunshine Wind Band [Пекинский духовой ансамбль «Солнечный свет»] выступает на общественных концертах в Пекине круглый год. Группа образована в 2007 году, её основала Линь И вместе с мужем Чжао Инлинем. В 1995 году Линь И перенесла хирургическое вмешательство (онкология), но выздоровела и решила сформировать ансамбль из примерно ста пенсионеров. Её участники начинают учиться музыке уже после выхода на пенсию, и в ходе многочасовых репетиций взрослые ученики приобретают музыкальные навыки. Они исполняют китайскую музыку, используя нотацию цзяньпу, но все их инструменты — западные: это деревянные и медные духовые, а также ударные. Выступают на национальных мероприятиях, в музеях и библиотеках; группа гастролировала по Тайваню, Корею, Гонконгу и Макао.

Концертные ансамбли — это гражданские версии военных оркестров. Они исполняют марши (например, «Марш Народно-освободительной армии») и лирические песни («Моя страна» из фильма 1956 года). Их выступления вызывают революционные настроения исполнением таких сюит, как «Красный отряд женщин». Группа исполняет песни, сочиненные в течение нескольких десятилетий после смерти Мао,

**Keywords:**

China, Beijing, Retirement, Recreation, Music Education, Wind Band, Concert Band, Brass Band, Military Band, National Music, Participant-Observation, Ethnomusicology.

такие как Dare to Ask the Way из телесериала «Путешествие на Запад». Тревор Герберт заявил, что концертные группы служат «рациональным развлечением». Цель данной статьи — показать, как китайская национальная концертная группа создала здоровый образ жизни для пенсионеров, выздоравливающих от рака и других видов инвалидности.

**Ключевые слова:**

Китай, Пекин, пенсия, отдых, музыкальное образование, духовой оркестр, концертный оркестр, оркестр медных духовых инструментов, военный оркестр, национальная музыка, наблюдение за участниками, этномузыкалогия.

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**Introduction to Fieldwork with a Chinese Western Concert Band in Beijing**

Lately, as a trumpet player, adjunct college professor, and former high school concert band director who had taken up participant-observer-ethnomusicology research in Ghana, West Africa among the Asante and published on their ivory trumpet ensembles [7], I decided to look to China and its 20th century concert band tradition. Such Chinese bands have been performing in New York City, my city, at funerals and parties since 1999. I began their study in 2006, with a stronger focus after 2013 and eventually joined bands and performed with them as a professional since 2014. As I was eager to travel to China to compare the New York tradition to the mainland tradition, I prepared a conference talk on the New York Chinese brass-wind band tradition in its transnational context for the 3rd Forum of the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), which

addressed “Approaches to Research on Music and Dance in the Age of the Internet.” The Forum took place in Beijing at the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) in July 2018, and my paper was titled, “Text Messaging, Social Media, and the Transmission of Fujianese Brass Band Culture in New York’s Chinatown.”<sup>1</sup> My talk dealt with the use of smartphones and profile sharing on social media such as WeChat, whereby New York Chinese musicians introduced me to translation apps such as Baidu, Pleco, and Google. My newly found communication facilitated me in gaining personal stories of musicians, and I also took snapshots of *jianpu* (number notation) music sheets by way of my smartphone camera. Band directors also text messaged to me *jianpu* from New York and from China. I then received invitations from musicians to join chat groups shared by musicians in both mainland China and New York, which helped me gain access to hundreds of personal videos of Chinese brass band performances.

My talk at the 3rd Beijing Forum was met with enthusiasm by the Chinese students. I had asked Professor Boyu Zhang of CCOM if I would be able to teach my Asante music research at the conservatory. I had given him copies of my foremost publications, and after he had spoken with the department chair, An Ping, I was offered a one year residency as a visiting professor of ethnomusicology, during which time I conducted fieldwork with a local, distinguished concert band, The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble (see photo 1), also known just as the Beijing Sunshine Wind Band Art Troupe, or just Sunshine (*Yangguang* in Mandarin). *Yangguang* is comprised of retired workers from Beijing who learned Western wind instruments anew in their retirement. The retirement age for men is 60. For women it is 50. Essentially the band's musicians began their musical educations during their retirement, reaching, in a short time, proficient intermediate levels to perform the national songs and marches of China in advertised, community concerts at parks, malls, and auditoriums. *Yangguang* also has toured to Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and South Korea.

Coincidentally, during the time of my first one month visit to Beijing in 2018, I

maintained contact with Chinese musicians in New York. Most influential to my fieldwork in New York and abroad was Kaifei Lin, a trumpet player originally from Fuzhou now living and working in New York's Chinatowns. Kaifei has helped me find Chinese national songs and marches that are played both in China and New York in the Chinese wind ensembles. He is the administrator of a WeChat group simply called, "Trumpet Music." After the ICTM Forum had ended that July, I text messaged Kaifei at his personal WeChat account to ask if he knew of any concert bands in Beijing for me to join. He immediately shared my WeChat contact card with Lin Yi, a co-founder and administrator of *Yangguang*. He introduced me to her and told her how much I had performed with the Chinese bands in New York. Because he had messaged her that I was in Beijing looking to play, she befriended and messaged me the same day on WeChat, inviting me to *Yangguang's* rehearsal the next morning. On the rainy morning of Tuesday, July 17, 2018, Lin Yi picked me up in a taxi at my hotel and we proceeded to the first rehearsal at a community center in *Kaiyangqiao* (English: Open Sun Bridge), where I first photographed copies of the band's *jianpu* arrangements, and then joined the band as a co-principal



*Photo 1. Members of The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble Performing at Taoranting Pavilion, Beijing, China [credit: Lin Yi, 2018]*

trumpeter. The second rehearsal was on Thursday morning, July 19, at Dongbinhe River Road Community Center, where we ended up rehearsing most in 2019. My first concerts were on the mornings of July 21 and 22. Both were three-hour performances, from 08:30 am to 11:30. They took place at *Taoranting* (English: Leisure Pavilion Park), located in Xicheng District in the southern part of Beijing, a lakeside garden where literati met during the Qing Dynasty.

After my 2018 talk at the ICTM Forum, I followed up with another talk the next September on my newly begun fieldwork with *Yangguang*. This subsequent talk took place at the 22nd CHIME (Worldwide Platform for Chinese Music Research) Meeting in Beijing, in September 2019, also at the Central Conservatory of Music.<sup>2</sup> This meeting's theme was "Contrasts in Chinese Music," and I strongly felt that the twentieth-century national music of China scored for concert band was a huge contrast to the topics of traditional Chinese music, as well as the Chinese "new music" based on Western *avant-garde*. Sections of this article draw on my talk at the CHIME meeting and my continuing fieldwork with *Yangguang* in Beijing from the fall of 2019 through the midwinter to Lunar New Year Day on January 25, 2020. My fieldwork covered *Yangguang*'s repertoire, music education, and my own participant-observation gaining backgrounds to the band members' histories. By this time, I had begun my visiting professorship at CCOM teaching West African and American music courses. My employment at CCOM provided me with a free apartment in Beijing and a salary to pay for the fieldwork.

The ensemble classification of the Beijing Sunshine Wind Band Art Troupe may be interpreted as a "concert band," to avoid confusion about the types of wind instruments played. Band members play Western wind instruments, not the Chinese traditional instruments such as the *dizi*, *suona*, or *sheng*. *Yangguang* includes sections of clarinets, flutes, saxophones, an oboe,

trumpets, French horns, trombones, tenor horns, tubas, and a battery of percussion, the make-up of a concert band. Trevor Herbert states that concert bands are the civilian versions of the 'military bands' [15, p. 49], civilian versions forming alongside the military bands over time. Concert bands have their own performance domain. The 'sound world' is predictable to listeners and can be taken as evidence of the idiom's maturity. He finds that the Western wind band is a distinct sphere of activity that stands apart from other related forms of instrumental music-making. It remains as an unaltered form [Ibid., p. 33] since it appeared suddenly during the latter part of the nineteenth-century, as a 'finished form,' the result of the technological changes in wind and brass instrument-making in Europe [12, p. 28]. *Yangguang* is a replica of a military band that performs Chinese military marches, songs, and classics. *Yangguang*'s conductors are drawn from The People's Liberation Army Band. I performed for all of *Yangguang*'s services during the time I was in Beijing in 2018 and 2019–20, amounting to 19 rehearsals and 22 performances.

In my studies, I look at Chinese music in its contemporary sense, for Chinese musicians have been playing Western brass and wind instruments since at least the late 19th century. I conceptualize China as a 21st century phenomenon with a long 20th century history in modernization via westernization. I quote Simon Leys here: 'For the West, the problem with China is first the problem of how we know China. No observer approaches her safely. As he thinks he is describing her, he may actually be revealing his own secret fantasies, and in a sense, whoever talks about China talks about himself.'<sup>3</sup> So, Westerners talk about China in the manner they wish to know her, maybe as an 'Oriental' phenomenon wherein Western musical developments might distract one from exoticist fantasies of Chinese musical culture as the 'other.' Barbara Mittler who quotes Leys perceived this issue with the lack of fieldwork in the research of

contemporary Chinese popular songs.<sup>4</sup> As a researcher, I like to look into contemporary Chinese popular music, and I thus see the relevance of the national Chinese songs from the past 70 years influencing the Chinese concert band domain. It fits Hebert's model of a concert band performing as a civilian military band. This is a patriotic music in China's sense of the Motherland, 'matriotic.' It is contemporary in its Eastern adaption of Western instruments to national music, and modeled after its Western precursor, the Western military band.

In the academic circles I had been with at the two Beijing conferences, I found interests in Chinese traditional music and the 'new music' which is mostly Eastern-Western fusion compositions from the conservatories. My view of the contemporary Chinese matriotic music is from the community perspective, loving China as home and singing about it, songs of the urban Beijing folk. National songs are arranged for concert bands that perform in parks and for community associations. I find that the Chinese concert band tradition is a derivative of the late 19th century European military and concert band tradition that was introduced to China and now manifested in *Yangguang*, a living tradition, with a legacy. Chinese concert bands *are not* a popular topic in Western or Chinese circles. The topic needs to be looked at from an Asianist perspective. The 21st century music culture is an interaction of East with West. I address what modern China has done with China's traditional repertoire in a Western concert band that reinterprets Chinese music.

*Yangguang* was formed in 2007, co-founded by Lin Yi who is principal singer and bass drummer. Lin Yi underwent cancer surgery in 1995 and recovered to form the band of retirees, today consisting of around 60 members. The musicians began their musical training in their retirements, self-taught, and as adult learners they practiced hours daily and participated in ensembles to gain musical proficiency. Herbert explains how the joining of amateur concert bands

is a 'rational recreation,' [15, p. 43] for also in The People's Republic of China, retirees seek such recreation for health, long life, and personal fulfilment. A retired person taking up a musical instrument and joining a band is a 'rational recreation.' To the players, the sound of the band is a 'warm home' that holds their participation. Their banding is a recreation where both their individuality and collectively are brought into play [Ibid., p. 46]. The legacy of their performance domain retains its idiomatic identity while passing through its moment of change and assuming a new identity in China. *Yangguang* has such a performance domain, and its new concert band repertoire makes it relevant to the contemporary lives of the participants [Ibid.].

All of *Yangguang*'s musical parts are in *jianpu* numerical notation, hand copied and shared. Some members know their parts by heart. I had access to the 1st trumpeter's parts, and I either photographed some, or received his scanned copies in jpegs via WeChat. I collected 69 parts in all. *Jianpu* literally means 'simple-scale,' and is the most used notation among Chinese musicians, the standard of both professionals and amateurs. It is numerical with movable *do*, 1 is *do*, and so on, with dots indicating register, and dashes indicating duration. It derived from the nineteenth-century Galin-Paris-Cheve system for music education in France and was introduced to China by Chinese students of Western music returning from Japanese conservatories around and after 1900 [4, p. 337].

### **Early Concert Bands of China and their Bearings on *Yangguang***

*Yangguang* follows a Chinese band tradition that took root in the 19th century. Oswaldo da Veiga Jardim Neto researched Portuguese military bands in Macau that bear a precedence to *Yangguang* who performed there in October 2018. Macau, a former Portuguese colony, was returned to China in 1999, *Yangguang* bringing their

new Chinese concert band music back. Neto reconstructed his Macau data from historical archives, ranging from references to the band of the Batalhão Príncipe Regente in 1818 to the radio broadcasts of 1934 and eventual abolition of the municipal band in 1935 due to world conflict [10, p. 143]. The Macau military band was already abolished in 1912 from the influence of new Republican ideals [Ibid., p. 195], when it was replaced by the city sponsored municipal band made up of the former military band musicians and civil servants [Ibid., p. 72]. The Macau Police Band was instituted in 1927 [Ibid., p. 110–111], and reorganized itself in 1951 after World War II [Ibid., p. 187–191]. The prior military band was made up of Portuguese troops, and they exclusively recruited Portuguese citizens for their military. This did not include Chinese. By 1931, Chinese and Filipino musicians did come to perform in the municipal band [Ibid., p. 131].

Neto's earliest documents from dairies and journals were not written by musically proficient people, so it was impossible for him to get exact band constituencies, numbers of players, musical training, or even types of instruments used [Ibid., p. 7–8]. By the end of the 19th century, the Portuguese bands followed the French band model, so he believes that 'woodwind instruments and saxophones replaced traditional brass instruments in some passages, softening the shrill and sometime coarse sound characteristic of military bands until then.' [Ibid., p. 43]. Woodwinds and saxophones today form large sections in *Yangguang*, so *Yangguang* incidentally follows the French/Portuguese concert band tradition. The Macau repertoire was predominantly European romantic and arranged for concert band including some Chinese song arrangements [Ibid., p. 119]. The performance of Chinese songs puts *Yangguang* in a unique position promoting Chinese musical repertoire via the concert band domain.

Shanghai, as a treaty port, hosted visiting military bands of European powers. From

a longing of the European Shanghailanders to have permanent musical entertainment, they formed the Philharmonic Society in 1864 and by 1875 musical life also centered on the Amateur Wind Instrument Society [1, p. 842]. These ensembles were formed in the British operated International Settlement where its by-laws mandated that more band concerts be performed in public parks [8, p. 51].

After a failed attempt at a police band in 1872, a public band finally was drawn up in 1878–1879 [1, pp. 840–841], referred to as the Shanghai Municipal Brass Band [8, p. 50]. The band took its instruments from the Amateur Wind Instrument Society, and it was funded by the private Shanghai Restoration Fund. Jean Rémusat was appointed to lead it and he traveled to Manila to recruit Filipino musicians. After this initial attempt had failed, the band was turned over to the Municipal Council, when, then, Spanish musician Melchior Vela was hired to organize the new band and he sailed to Manila to recruit new players. Vela also ordered classical sheet music and uniforms from Europe. He eventually amassed 494 works of music. The band's first concert was in 1882, and in 1885 the Shanghai Municipal Brass Band played over 100 community engagements.

In 1898, Spanish rule in the Philippines came to an end and more Shanghai agents sailed again to Manila to recruit better musicians from the disbanded colonial bands. Spain had fostered Filipino involvement in the colonial military and civic bands, the reason Filipino musicians were sought. At that time, there were still no Chinese personnel in the band, nor was there an attempt on the part of the band to attract a Chinese audience [1, p. 842–846].

Rudolf Buck introduced European symphonic music to Shanghai after 1906, but he left after World War I [Ibid., p. 852]. In 1922, the band was renamed the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra and Band [Ibid., pp. 840, 853], and by 1931, the orchestra drew a regular Chinese audience, about 20%, performing Chinese works with Chinese

students from the National Conservatory of Music [Ibid., p. 854]. The orchestra ceased in 1942 after the Japanese military takeover of the International Settlement, but a band associated with the Shanghai Philharmonic Society performed at National Recovery Day in August 1944. The Shanghai Municipal Orchestra survived the war and returned to performance in 1945. Chang Ho's "Victory of Democracy" was included on its first concert.

The Shanghai Municipal Brass Band also performed European compositions such as "Radetzky March" by Johann Strauss I, and the winter season "Jingle Bells." [Ibid., pp. 864–866]. Both of these songs are retained today in *Yangguang's* repertoire, including the pun performance of "Jingle Bells" in the hot, summer months.

The Irishman Sir Robert Hart in the British service as Chief Inspector General of Chinese Customs had formed a brass band in Tianjin by 1889 [9, p. 84], eventually moving it to Beijing [5]. He used his own money to order musical instruments, scores, and metronomes from England [Ibid., p. 16], and he recruited about a dozen Chinese men from haircutting, shoemaking, tailoring and cart-pulling professions [Ibid., p. 25]. The men learned to play the Western band instruments and performed weekly concerts at the Inspectorate Garden, Hart's garden, also playing for his parties. The concerts drew local residents as well as Western foreigners. In 1895, Hart recruited the Portuguese postmaster E.E. Encarnaçao to direct the band [9, p. 84], for Encarnaçao had prior band experience in Portugal [11]. Encarnaçao helped Hart later reform the band after the Boxer Rebellion in 1901 [5, pp. 18, 20]. There is not a consensus on the dates of Hart's band. Kuo-Huang Han stated that Hart made the first band in 1885 with a German musician named Biegle [Ibid., p. 18], who had left after some time. Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai state that Hart's band dates back that far and strings were added later after 1889 [9, p. 84]. Irene Peng states that the date of the band was 1895 [11]. Keith Robinson has a new publication on the topic

of Robert Hart, Robinson stating that the Jesuits were more important in the initial development of brass bands in China than Hart.<sup>5</sup>

In a photograph of Robert Hart's brass band under the direction of bandmaster, E.E. Encarnaçao (© Queen's University Belfast, Sir Robert Hart Collection, MS 15), the band is rehearsing outdoors, near one of the royal walls. The photo was taken sometime in the 1890s. In it, Encarnaçao is directing the band and playing the cornet. The Chinese musicians, wearing the traditional Chinese military attire with a turban head dress of that time, are playing mostly euphoniums, along with trombones, cornets, a piccolo flute, and a bass drum.<sup>6</sup>

Hart's band came to play important venues. In 1903, the Qing Empress Dowager, Cixi, commanded the band to perform at the Summer Palace [10, p. 95]. In 1904, at the Fourteenth Commencement Exercises at Peking University, the band performed Christian hymns by Chinese composers [Ibid.]. In 1905 the band performed music nightly from 8 p.m. to 11 at the Six Countries Hotel when Chinese and Japanese military leaders were meeting to negotiate the Manchurian issue [5, p. 25].

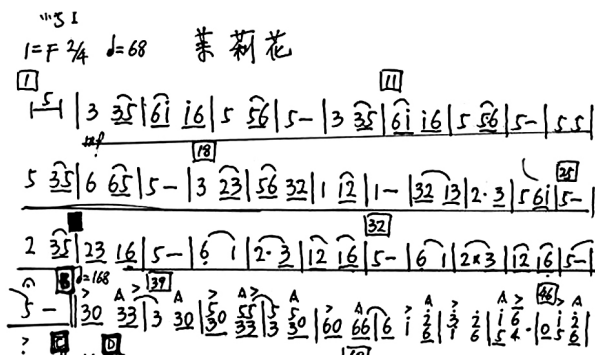
Hart's intention of having his own band perform Chinese songs has become realized in *Yangguang*, which performs concert band arrangements of Chinese songs such as "Jasmine Flower" ("Mo li hua"). "Jasmine Flower" happens to be a Chinese song transcribed into Western staff notation by J. A. Van Aalst, in his book commissioned by Robert Hart titled *Chinese Music* (1884). Van Aalst's transcription captioned as "The Fresh Beautiful Flower" in Example 1 appears on page 19 in Aalst's book.<sup>7</sup> He made the transcription by ear, and this version is certainly a rendition of the song. It was used by the Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini who studied Aalst's work and quoted it in his opera "Turandot."<sup>8</sup>

*Yangguang's* musical notation is *jianpu* numerical notation. Example 2 is the 1st trumpet part to "Mo li Hua." The melody is



Example 1. “The Fresh Beautiful Flower,”  
transcribed by J. A. Van Aalst, in *Chinese Music*  
(Beijing, 1884)<sup>9</sup>

in one of the Chinese pentatonic modes, the *Zhi* mode, with the *jianpu* numerical steps marked 5 6 1 2 3. Here, in the key of F, which is marked at the top of the page, the *Zhi* mode is C D F G A. The melody begins on A (3). It modulates to the *Gong* mode, F G A C D, on the second line and then right back to *Zhi*. It ends on C (5), at the double barline on the fourth staff, its final cadence in the *Zhi* mode.



Example 2. Excerpt from the 1st trumpet part  
of “Mo li hua” (“Jasmine Flower”)  
from *The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine*  
Wind Arts Ensemble  
[credit: Zhang Lili, Beijing, 2018]

The bands in Shanghai and Beijing, and a growing understanding of the role of bands in coordinating troops in Western armies, led several Chinese leaders, including the reform-minded Liang Qichao, to reform their military music [9, p. 84]. The first modern Chinese military brass band was made in 1897 by Zhang Zhidong — the governor-general of Hunan and Hebei. Zhang hired a German bandmaster to train fifteen members in music and marching [Ibid., p. 84–85].

Yuan Shikai was a Chinese military and government official who ascended to power during the late Qing Dynasty. He modernized China’s bureaucratic, fiscal, judicial, and education systems to save the Dynasty in the face of Western pressures. After China’s defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, he set out to modernize the military for the Qing. Like Zhang Zhidong, Yuan Shikai in 1898 made the Qing military band and he also hired a German bandmaster, who Kuo-Huang Han stated was called “Goldstar” [6]. Han regrets that we do not know Goldstar’s real name [Ibid., p. 35], for perhaps he wore a Prussian gold star on his left breast as a part of the Prussian uniform, and the troops referenced him accordingly.

In 1903, Yuan organized three military band training camps in Tianjin for players who served in the armies of six other towns [11]. Han indicates that Yuan’s band also played alongside Hart’s for the Empress Dowager at the Summer Palace in 1903 [5, p. 23]. Han also states that eight of Hart’s musicians quit him to join Yuan’s band in Tianjin for a higher salary [Ibid., p. 24].

In 1909, a twenty piece military band was formed from the palace guards who protected the Forbidden City and it was trained by Encarnaçao [Ibid., p. 10]. Melvin and Cai stated that there were no Chinese songs for Western style bands at this time so the band played “Auld Lang Syne” and American songwriter Stephen Foster’s “Home Sweet Home.” [9, p. 86]. This band must have been taught these songs by Encarnaçao, for Han states that Hart’s band, under Encarnaçao,



performed these same songs for Hart when Hart departed to England in 1908 [5, p. 22], a year earlier.

After the last Qing emperor Xuantong abdicated in 1912 for the new democratic Republic of China, Yuan negotiated his way to being the first president. He almost become a dictator before his death in 1916 [13]. After his death the warlord era began, from 1916 to 1928, and military brass bands proliferated over the country with fifteen bands by 1919, including three bands in Shanghai [9, p. 86]. Robinson's research concerns the whereabouts of Encarnaçao after 1910,<sup>10</sup> so thus Hart's former director may still have found Chinese employment, but there is no further mention of him. Fred Gales states that warlords maintained the military brass bands and that the troops' movements popularized bands in villages throughout the country. Villagers then formed civilian versions of the military bands for ceremonies and funerals [2].

The bugle was an important icon in Mao Zedong's forces during the Long March (1934–1936), a bugle call being blown in Nie Er's "March of the Volunteers" from the 1935 film *Fengyun ernu (Children of Troubled Times)*.<sup>11</sup> The march became the national anthem of the People's Republic of China in 1949. After 1949, Chinese band music became nationalized and based about songs for the People's Liberation Army.

*Yangguang's* traditional songs like "Jasmine Flower" are mixed with Chinese military marches, such as "The People's Liberation Army March," and later songs from the post-Mao era, such as the waltz "Me and My Motherland," composed by Qin Yongcheng in 1985. "Me and My Motherland" made a powerful revival in 2019 for the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

*Yangguang's* performances recall revolutionary sentiments in the arrangements of suites from the ballets *The Red Detachment of Women* and *The White haired Girl*. *Yangguang* also performs the popular song from 1980s television

series *Journey to the West*. *Yangguang* thus performs a repertoire of traditional Chinese songs alongside the twentieth century songs and marches that maintain the nationalism and dignity of the Government of People's Republic of China. These songs and marches are those played by the People's Liberation Army Band as well as by Chinese symphony orchestras. Many were composed during the 1950s and 60s and carry with them the militarism of the era, as a reminder of the struggle of maintaining independence in a crisis-laden world.

I list here some of *Yangguang's* songs in their English translations and without the composers' names, only to give the reader a sense of the nationalism, romanticism, pastoralism, cordiality, and vigil militarism expressed in the songs and marches: "Welcome March," "Song to the Motherland," "My Motherland," "Me and My Motherland," "I Love You China," "Athletes' March," "Good Day," "Grasslands Morning Song," "The August Osmanthus Blooms Everywhere," "Good News From Beijing to the Rural Areas," "A Mongolian House," "Bistro," "The Beautiful Grassland is My Home," "Northern Country Spring," "The Slavic Woman's Goodbye," "Farm Girl," "Building China's Common Dream," "Silver Construction Song," "Wish You Happiness," "I Don't Want to Say Goodbye," "Ah, Friend Goodbye," "The Chinese People's Liberation Army March," "Women's Army March," "Defend the Yellow River," "Formation March," "Naval March," "The People's Army is Loyal to the Party," "Advance Bravely in March," "The Red Star Song," "Chariot March," "Song of the Guerilla," "Strong Army Fight Song," "Return from the Shooting Range," "1-2-3 Song," "Chinese Army School," "The Mountain is Red," "Cavalryman March," "I Love You Northern Fortress Snow," "Chinese Teenager Vanguard Ensemble Song," "A Rocket Gun," "The 8th Army Song," "Forever Marco Polo Bridge," "Red Four," "Red Five," "Red Classic," "There Will Not be a New China Without the Communist Party," "Drive Away the Beast," "Holy War," "Triumphant

Return,” “Polish Waltz,” “Beer Barrel Polka,” “Radetzky March,” Jasmine Flower,” “Jingle Bells,” “Dare to Ask the Way.”<sup>12</sup>

On September 3, 2018, *Yangguang* performed a concert at the Museum of the War of Chinese People's Resistance against Japanese Aggression, marking the date of China's victory of the Anti-Fascist War and the War of Resistance Against Japan. One of the powerful marches on their program was “The People's Army is Loyal to the Party.” The music was composed in 1960 by Xiao Min and its lyrics are by Zhang Yongmei. In 1961, the song was listed by the General Political Department of the Military Commission as one of the 13 songs that the whole army must sing. As seen in its numerical notation (see Example 3), it begins with a bugle call symbolizing the war effort and the call to arms against Fascism. Then the melody is composed in one of the Chinese pentatonic modes, the *Gong* mode, with the *jianpu* numerical steps marked 1 2 3 5 6. Here, in the key of F which is marked at the top of the page, the *Gong* mode is F G A C D. The 4th tone appears a couple of times at the moment of a 4 bar modulation 7 bars before the cadence at the darkened

barline on line 4. Example 3 is scored for 3 parts, giving the top line to the 1st trumpet.

**The Members and Activities of The Beijing Sunshine Wind Arts Ensemble**

The following paragraphs are from a translation of a document emailed to me by Lin Yi, *Yangguang's* co-founder, about the band's activities.<sup>13</sup> She wrote it for me after I joined the band in 2018, and she wrote it for my research.

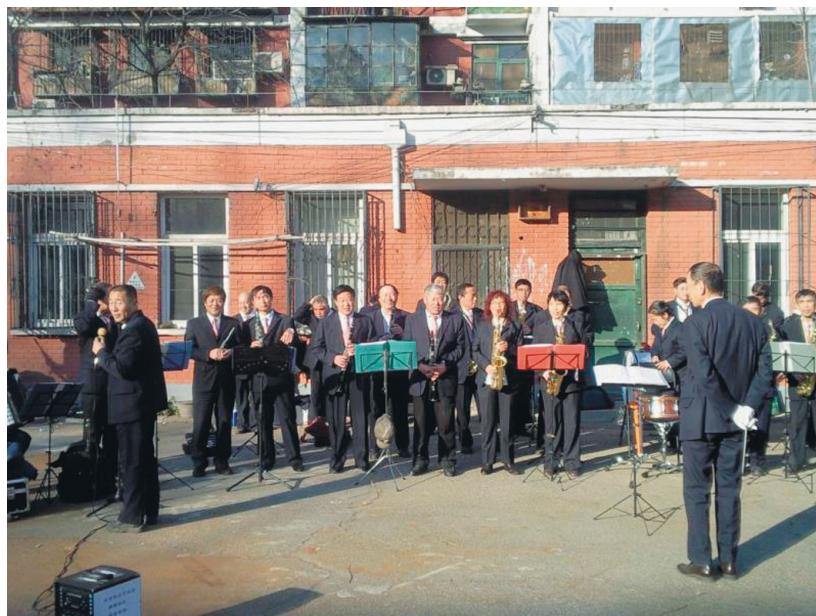
“The Beijing Sunshine Wind Band Art Troupe was established in 2007, the members coming from all over Beijing, composed of more than 100 retirees who love music. The average age is 63 years. I retired from my job to form the band. I found the value of life in retirement. Music enriches life and increases vitality. This is found in the band, and happiness leads to good health. I realized my dream of performing on a stage since I was young. The key is to be able to do what I like, and it is very important to fulfill my dream from youth. Our troupe insists on rehearsing all year round, to develop playing skills and to have a richer performance experience. *Yangguang* accepts many performances every year, and we have won the praise of audiences and the trust and recognition of the high authorities. Our group has had cultural exchanges with Taiwanese folk art groups, Korean art groups, and art groups in Hong Kong. It is my group's dream to travel the world for cultural exchanges, and to show the elderly of other countries how Chinese retire and live by using their own resources. Our troupe has a sound organization with strong cohesion, with the leader, the director, and the voices of the members as the backbone. The whole troupe came together to form a wind music art team with clear rules and regulations, strict discipline, a strong style, and strong effectiveness, which can satisfy higher requirements and the need for performance activities.

Example 3. Excerpt from “The People’s Army is Loyal to the Party,” from *The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Arts Ensemble* [credit: Zhang Lili, Beijing, 2018]

“The scale and performance level of our band is prominent and influential among the public amateur wind bands in Beijing. A first-rate conductor from the National Orchestra was hired as the band’s advisor. The musical quality and level of the performers is constantly rising. Our troupe has a complete set of instruments, which can play larger repertoires with multiple parts and that can interpret the charm and connotation of the classic repertoire more accurately and delicately. The members of our troupe are versatile and talented, including a group of male and female opera singers. We also work with and support folk artists and dancers to enrich the needs of Beijing’s cultural stage in a variety of ways. Our group also serves the community, the elderly, and the disabled, and we make due contributions to national public sacrifice in our activities and undertakings in public welfare, winning us a good reputation.”

Lin Yi, *Yangguang*’s co-founder, bass drummer, and singer, recovered from cancer before making the band with her

husband. Her operation was in 1995, and they had the idea for making the band in 2007. Her husband, Zhao Yinglin, is the founder and a percussionist, and he handles most of the band’s administrative details (see photo 2). Lin and Zhao have been married since 1981. Before retirement, Zhao worked in e-commerce and traveled abroad for his business. After Lin Yi had become ill, he retired early to care for her during her recovery. Their story is a tale of retirement and new lives in music. They formed *Yangguang*. They perform without a fee, and their band is neither funded by the Chinese Central Government nor privately sponsored. Lin Yi told me that she sometimes pays for expenses from her own resources, and sometimes audience members give donations to the band at the Taoranting performances. Lin Yi’s only regret in her life is not being with her father when he died in the hospital on November 14, 2017. She was making a television taping with *Yangguang* that morning, which went over into the afternoon, and his death was sudden.



*Photo 2. An early photograph of The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble setting up for a concert. Zhao Yinglin is to the far left with his front half-turned. Lin Yi is setting up a drum [credit: Zhao Yinglin, 2009]*



*Photo 3. The author Joseph S. Kaminski sitting with the trumpet section of The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble at a Taoranting Pavilion concert (November 2019)*

Most of my *jianpu* music manuscripts were given to me by Zhang Lili, the principal trumpeter. I sat next to Zhang and assisted him at every rehearsal and concert during my time in Beijing (see photo 3). He picked me up at my apartment at the CCOM campus in his car before every service. He is entirely self-taught and learned saxophone first, and then trumpet, by sitting in with amateur bands in parks since the 1990s. He said that at the beginning, he brought a tape recorder to record the bands, and then he would go home to learn the music by ear. He has been with *Yangguang* since its first recruitment in 2008 and first concerts in 2009. Zhang said that *Yangguang* had originally performed at Jinshan Park in central Beijing in 2009, and then later moved to Taoranting in 2013.

Zhang, before his retirement and new musical life, worked for Beijing Construction and Engineering Corporation in equipment leasing and maintenance. He now has a strong lip for the trumpet with good endurance. His trumpet is a Yamaha medium-large bore, made in Japan. In 2018, he brought me to the Beijing Military Brass Music Culture & Arts Co. LTD building, where I bought the set of *100 Chinese and Foreign Wind Music Ensemble Parts, Notation, Song*

*Collection and Playing Method* [3]. It is the complete Chinese People's Liberation Army Band book, written in Western staff notation for complete concert band. The 3rd trumpeter in *Yangguang*, Liu Yongli, plays a Fides trumpet, made in Taiwan. Liu worked as a manager for a commercial advertising firm.

Auxiliary percussionist of *Yangguang*, Wu Changbao, made tanks for the Chinese military. Some band members were medical doctors, and some were taxi drivers. *Yangguang* also maintains an operatic soprano for songs such as, "I Love You China." Currently, she is Cao Min, who I worked with 2019–2020. Li Aizhen sang in 2014. Toward the end of 2019 and in January 2020, a new trumpet soloist joined the band, Zhang Xinhua. He performed "I Love You China" also, when Cao Min was not on the program. Feng Tongcai, *Yangguang's* principal flautist and operatic baritone, sings duets with Lin Yi (see photo 4). Before retirement he manufactured airplanes.

The fourth trumpeter, Zeng Hong, was a woodworker in the military industry. He plays a Hsinghai trumpet that has a small bore and seems to be a copy of an American Conn 22B New York Symphony model. The



Photo 4. Feng Tongcai singing a duet with Lin Yi at Taoranting Pavilion.

Beijing, China

[photo by the author, July 2018]

small bore enables him to play easily in the high register, but with a small sound just like the Conn 22B. Hsinghai instruments are manufactured in Beijing, and I found a vintage Hsinghai trumpet that I bought and played with the band. I visited the modern Hsinghai Company and they did not have records of years of the serial numbers. From literature on trumpet designs that were given to me at the company, I estimated that Zeng's trumpet was made in the early 1960s and mine made later, maybe also in the 1960s. My Hsinghai is tuned to B-flat and A, so in *jianpu* notation it would be easy to play in both sharp keys and flat keys with the same fingerings just by pulling out the slide for flat or double flat keys. This apparently was a requirement in the national Chinese repertory orchestras of the 1960s.

The conductor of the ensemble is Guo Xiangming (see photo 5). Guo had formerly conducted the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Bands. He wrote many of *Yangguang's* arrangements, particularly the well-known "My Motherland," from the 1956 film *Shangganling*. He joined the band first for

the summer season of June 2016 to October 2016, and then joined as the principal conductor in May 2019. He was conductor of *Yangguang* during the height of my fieldwork, and I performed with him more than any other conductor. Lin Yi has told me that when Guo first came to *Yangguang*, he brought a tenor horn home to learn it. She also said that he is the finest conductor from his artistic virtue to character.

In fall 2019 when Guo was absent from rehearsals, Wang Gui Hua, a current conductor of the People's Liberation Army Band, substituted. Whereas Guo told me to play lyrically, Wang told me to sustain my sound evenly when playing beneath a melody, and on the other hand, he showed me how to play a true march staccato, shorter! In a WeChat email after the rehearsal, Wang had written to me, "Thank you for your support because the band is made of fulltime music-loving retirees who I was touched by for their love of music."

*Yangguang* has had several conductors throughout the years. Chen Ming and Bao Guozhong came in 2013. On my first trip to Beijing in July 2018, Li Yulin was *Yangguang's*



*Photo 5. Conductor of The Beijing City  
Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble, Guo Xiangming,  
preparing for a performance before the 2019 International Volunteer Games  
[photo by the author, October 12, 2019]*

conductor. Ma Jie and Wang Zhesheng also sometimes stepped up to the podium.

Lin Yi gives much credit to the oboist Zhang Hao, who has been with *Yangguang* since their first concerts in July 2009. “Zhang Hao is our planner and propaganda teacher,” she says. He is highly responsible for the coordination of events at nursing homes, libraries, arts festivals, community events, and history celebrations.

Occasionally, *Yangguang* is joined by Lin Han Dong, who is a regular member. He is a retired bugler and trumpeter from the People’s Liberation Army Band who also sings baritone and sometimes conducts the band. During an intermission of one of the Taoranting concerts, he demonstrated to me one of the Chinese military bugle signals. He and I then got into a bugle competition, and he won, really because of his emotion and character in his bugle call. I heard the audience cheer more for him. Lin Han Dong sometimes sings the baritone aria from *The White Haired Girl*.

Chinese news stations such as CCTV have done human interest stories on *Yangguang*,

with interviews of Lin Yi, Zhao Yinglin, and band members. I never had asked band members for personal information because my interest in interviewing them was only to find out about their lives as workers and professionals before their retirements (see photo 6). There was a lot I did not know about them while I was performing with them. However, the news stories reveal a side of *Yangguang* that I had not previously known. Yalin Wu, a student of Minzu University of China and assistant of mine, has translated six various television news stories with interviews of *Yangguang*. Lin Yi keeps them in her collection and shared them with me. I arranged Wu’s translations and I post excerpts from them below.

“*Yangguang* is an amateur band composed of music lovers. There are 90 members with an average age of 65. They all look energetic, but in fact, there are more than 20 people with different degrees of physical disability, and more than 10 people with cancer. The members feel very happy to be able to forget their physical illness in this band. It’s not easy to organize such a band. Bao



*Photo 6. Musicians of Yangguang walking  
to a concert performance  
at Taoranting Pavilion in Beijing  
[photo by the author, July 2018]*

Guozhong has a sacrum bone crack and is an ankylosing spondylitis patient with femoral head necrosis. Now through playing music, his pain is much less than before. Bao states, 'In the past, I used to take a lot of medicine every day, but now it is reduced a little.' Zhao Yinglin, Lin Yi's husband, lacks a fibula from childhood and is clinically disabled. Lin Yi has had breast cancer. She said that when she heard she had cancer, she collapsed and felt that her life had come to an end. Lin Yi said that the small band she started was just for self-entertainment. In addition, everyone practiced every day so that they could forget their illness and live a fuller life. Later after training to a certain extent, they took part in some community performances. Lin Yi came out of the shadow of cancer and became healthier and confident. Under her

influence, more and more cancer patients and disabled people joined the group.

"In 2005, Zhao made a decision not to watch his lover give up. This decision changed the couple's life, for they strolled around a park one day and saw and heard other people singing. Lin Yi inadvertently joined them. Zhao was in a good state of mind when he watched her sing and forgot about her illness for the time being. When she was young, she was a good performer. Unexpectedly, this chance released the pressure of illness and malice in her heart. This is also the first time in more than ten years that Zhao has seen a smile on her face. So whenever he had time, Zhao would bring Lin Yi to the park to sing. Before long, Zhao saw a problem because other people made singing rules and Lin had to wait a long time before her turn to sing. This did not make her comfortable or happy, so Zhao developed the idea to create a band so his wife could sing whenever and wherever she wanted.

"In the belief of making love happy, Zhao called a dozen elders who also liked music in the park, so they could set up a small band and Lin Yi become the principal singer. Now, in addition to singing, Lin Yi became a drummer. She said that because her armpit was completely cut off during her operation, at the beginning her hand could not be brought up to strike a drum; her arm was stiff. As a result, Zhao accompanied Lin Yi regularly to a musical instrument shop to learn music theory and drumming. Gradually, Lin Yi learned from a good model. Gradually, laughter and sunshine returned to the family.

"Band member Shi Gang states that psychology has revealed that positive emotions are conducive to the improvement of immunity, while negative emotions are not conducive to physical and mental health. The elders who live to be very old all have a common feature, they are all in a good mood. Shi states, 'So we are reluctant to part in this band because there is a joy, a joy to bring us health.'

"In 2013, the orchestra developed to a certain level. In order to standardize the

level before performance, they invited Chen Ming, an experienced musician, to be the conductor and instructor of the orchestra. Chen Ming is a patient who has had a heart transplant. It is music that gives him life support. He came to the band and the spirit of the old people affected him because these old people are not professional musicians. Chen Ming said that it is necessary to solve the problem of improving music theory through examinations. As a result, after rehearsing in the morning, the old people played well in groups in the afternoon, and those who understood music theory were led to serious engagement. Chen Ming was moved by their spirit.

“Li Aizhen and her husband both have disabilities. They came to this band to bring happiness to the society and to the people who have helped them. Li said that after retirement, she is the happiest, for music brings happiness to everyone and herself. Happiness, health, unity and harmony are the slogans of The Sunshine Band. They are all retired elders. A happy and healthy musical life makes them younger. The Sunshine of music is all over the heart of the old people.

“Hong Guiyou, who had similar experience, became the first person to join the band. He said it’s easier to get sick at home than to be happier in the band. In this way, like Hong, sick and retired persons also joined the band. They really became happy.

“These old people who have worked hard for the society and family all their lives can find another kind of joy and sustenance in their life from music after retirement. Isn’t their happy and contented appearance exactly what their children expect from the society? When we think of some old people who are often surrounded by weakness and loneliness because of their old age, we cannot help feeling that since they cannot choose the fact that they will eventually grow old, why not choose to live gracefully and optimistically. Although from the beginning to the end, *Yangguang* is not a professional band, but their attentive performance also

began to get more and more recognition and support. Originally the band belonged to the couple’s small happiness, but in the end it is continuing to be their Sunshine and joy. Let those who have suffered from pain reignite the courage to face life, and let them play a new movement of life with music.”<sup>14</sup>

September 2019 was my first time back to China since July 2018, and so I resumed the Saturday and Sunday morning concerts with *Yangguang* at Taoranting, which gave me much playing opportunity. During that fall, I rehearsed with the band mostly in the banquet room of *Hantingjiudian* (Hanting Hotel). Later that month, when the Pavilion underwent construction, we just rehearsed, with an occasional performance, until winter. Our most important service then was for the International Volunteer Games that took place on the evening of Saturday October 12 at an army recruiting school in Changping, north of Beijing. We played a series of marches as the athletic competitors processed onto the courtyard, especially “Athlete’s March,” and then we played a short concert. We also performed at the World Intelligent Vehicles Conference on October 23, 2019.

The Taoranting concerts had resumed on October 13, and our rehearsals resumed at Dongbinhe River Road Community Center. Over the winter we played several concerts prior to the Lunar New Year, joining with cultural arts troupes at Hobson Mall, the Friendship Health Community Center, the Dongcheng District Library, Chaoyangmen Culture and Sports Center, Chongwen Workers Cultural Palace, and The People’s Liberation Army Opera House.

## Conclusions

China made the Western military and concert band tradition its own, as seen in the example of The Beijing City Eastern District Sunshine Wind Music Arts Ensemble, and concert bands have taken the people in new directions for their own political and recreational purposes.



China's modern military music was an inspirational force in defeating the Japanese aggression in the Second World War, and it still continues to inspire Chinese pride and independence from foreign influence since 1949, the year of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

For amateur musicians, such beautiful and emotionally powerful music as *Yangguang's* has a healthy effect on them.

Lin Yi says that the music has cured her cancer, for she has not been back to the hospital since *Yangguang* began in 2007.

Music education thus comes at any age and with any ability.

Participant-observer ethnomusicology requires respect for new friends' dignity, by the fieldworker remaining unobtrusive and patient in the utmost sensitive of circumstances, as facts emanating from the fieldwork fall into place (see photo 7).



*Photo 7. The author Joseph S. Kaminski  
with Lin Yi at Hobson Mall.  
Beijing, China (September 2019)*

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Music Academic Season CCOM, International Music Forum with Six Sister Societies: The 3rd Forum for the International Council from Traditional Music. Approaches to Music and Dance in the Internet Era, 2018/07/11–14. URL: [http://zhuanti.ccom.edu.cn/2018yyx/yywd/rcap/201805/t20180529\\_48011.html](http://zhuanti.ccom.edu.cn/2018yyx/yywd/rcap/201805/t20180529_48011.html) (accessed: 03/18/2021).
- <sup>2</sup> CHIME (Worldwide Platform for Chinese Music Research). CHIME 2019 Program. URL: <https://c0d7c8f1-0bcd-4ba6-b99e-bb9f0007d292.filesusr.com/ugd/c191efa20c61c80fb2472787f9a9e415a63412.pdf> (accessed: 03/20/2021).
- <sup>3</sup> ...cited in Barbara Mittler. *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997, p. 388; from Simon Leys, *The Burning Forest*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1986).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Keith Robinson. *Sir Robert Hart: The Musician* (Lulu.com: All Rights Reserved — Standard Copyright License, 2020).
- <sup>6</sup> “Music in Hart’s China — Special Collections Blog at Queen’s University, Belfast. URL: <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/specialcollections/music-in-harts-china/> (accessed: 03/20/2021).
- <sup>7</sup> Antipodean. “[China] Van Aalst, J.A. Chinese Music. Published by Order of the Inspector general of Customs. China. Imperial Maritime Customs. II. Special series: No. 6.” URL: <https://www.antipodean.com/pages/books/23423/china-j-a-van-aalst/chinese-music-published-by-order-of-the-inspector-general-of-customs-china-imperial-maritime?soldItem=true> (accessed: 03/18/2021).
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> J.A. Van Aalst. *Chinese Music*. II. — Special series: No. 6. China. Imperial Maritime Customs. Published by Order of the Inspector General of Customs. (Shanghai: The Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1884). (Reprint. Middletown, DE: LAN Press, 2021), p. 19.
- <sup>10</sup> Keith Robinson. Personal correspondence. Facebook comment to Joe Kaminski, “Yuan Shikai’s Home in Tianjin.” December 13, 2019.
- <sup>11</sup> The March of the Volunteers 义勇军进行曲 (1934). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6icFnCSF2yA> (November 16, 2006).
- <sup>12</sup> Translations of the titles were made by Yaqi Hu, a student volunteer at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, July 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> Lin Yi, co-founder and director of The Beijing City Eastern District Wind Music Arts Ensemble. Personal correspondence, November 2018.
- <sup>14</sup> Translated by Yalin Wu, Minzu University of China, 2021.

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