

“Oldies” of Old Shanghai

(Extracted from: <http://atatamete.blogspot.com/2011/02/tragic-old-shanghai.html>)

“To give you a taste, I did a little search on the net and found some remarkable singers and actresses from old Shanghai.



(watch video - Click on pic)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adZTK8tCL3s&feature=player_embedded

Here is a music video featuring a clip from the 1934 film "The Goddess". The film tells the story of a nameless young woman living in Shanghai as a prostitute, trying to support herself and her son. One night, on the run from the police, she ends up in the room of an evil gambler who hides her and then considers her his property. He threatens to take away her son if she doesn't keep giving him money. However, she manages to hide some of her money in the hope of escaping one day.

In the 1920's and 30's, Shanghai was one of the world's hotspots for jazz music and other hybrids of Eastern and Western popular culture. A great example of Shanghai's creative power in the Jazz Age was the dress the actress, *Ruan Lingyu*, wore in this movie. It's a style that was created in Shanghai in the 1920's known as a cheongsam and is still in use today.

The song in this video, Shanghai Nights, was sung by *Zhou Xuan*, who was a popular singer and actress during the 1930's and 40's.

Unfortunately, Zhou Xuan led a very tumultuous life. After introducing "Shanghai Nights" in 1949, Zhou returned to Shanghai. She spent the next few years in and out of mental institutions, owing to frequent breakdowns. Through the years, Zhou led a complicated and unhappy life marked by her failed marriages, illegitimate children, and suicide attempts. She died in a mental institution in Shanghai on 1957 at the age of 39.

She is survived by two sons, one of which, is Zhou Wei. He currently lives in Toronto performing at times in the TTC subways, and participating in various musical projects, including teaching. He is a known flautist.



(watch video – Click on Pic)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=5CwbZCASbEA

This song is a 1944 recording of "The Evening Primrose" by Li Xiang Lan. A remarkable "bolero style" arrangement. An interesting fact about this singer was that she was actually Japanese.

She was born as Yamaguchi Yoshiko in China, 1920. Her Chinese foster father gave her the name **Li Xiang Lan** when she was 13. She lived as a Chinese singer and actress, hiding the fact that she was Japanese until the end of World War II .

On June 1945, she held a concert at the Shanghai Grand Theatre. The concert was so successful that it ran for 3 days. On August 9th 1945, she held an encore concert for her fans at the Shanghai Race Track.

At the end of World War II, she was arrested by Chinese government for treason and collaboration with the Japanese. However, she was cleared of all charges, and possibly the death penalty, since she was not a Chinese national, and thus the Chinese government could not try her for treason.

When she held a concert in Japan, a local newspaper revealed that she was Japanese. To that she replied ---"I know the paper made my real name public, but I don't worry whether I lose my popularity. The important thing is how well I act and sing on the stage. And I think my nationality as just an East Asian woman." --- “