

Shanghai Concert Hall

Wartime Hub of Shanghai Rotary Club

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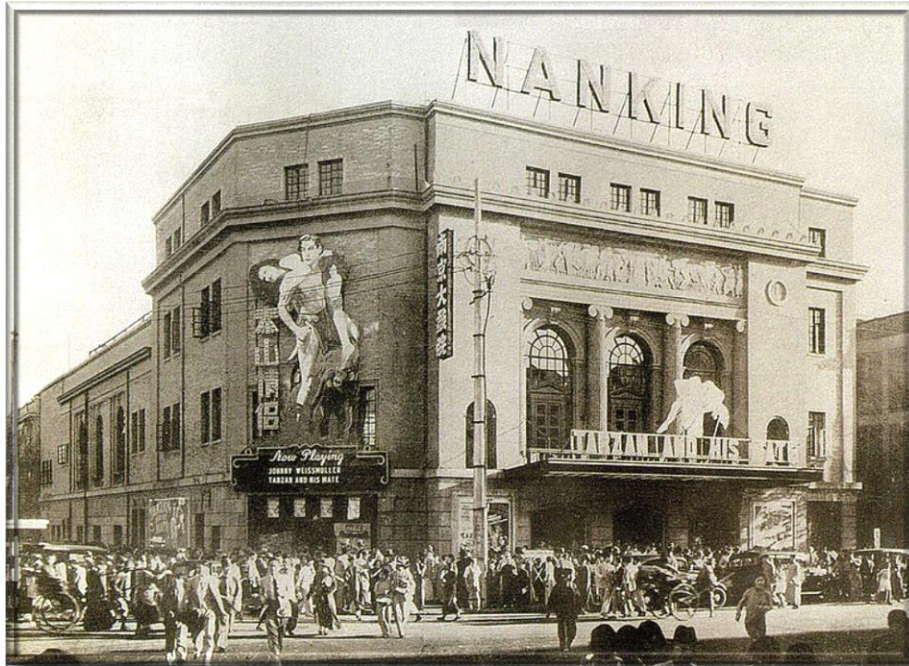


Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳)

Beaux-Arts Architecture

Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳) is located on the intersection of Yan'an Road and South Tibet Road of Huangpu District, Shanghai (上海市黃浦區延安路/西藏南路). The fabric structure of the Shanghai Concert Hall, originally The Nanking Theatre (南京大戲院) in 1930, was designed by Shanghai Rotarian architect Robert Fan (范文照) in Beaux-Arts style. Beaux-Arts architecture is a Neo-classical style that emphasizes sculptural decoration and extravagant detail, and one favored by the pre-Art Deco age: the Neo-classical style is on many buildings along the Shanghai Bund. In form, neo-classical architecture emphasizes the wall rather than chiaroscuro and maintains separate identities to each of its parts. The style is manifested both in its details as a reaction against the Rococo style of naturalistic ornament, and in its architectural formula as an outgrowth of some classicizing features of the Late Baroque architectural tradition.

From its completion to the year of 1949, the Nanking Theatre was mainly for movie shows, mostly the first hand movies by the American 20th Century Fox, Radio-Keith-Orpheum Pictures (RKO), Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios (MGM), etc. In 1949, its name was changed to Beijing Cinema (北京電影院). In 1959, known for its excellent acoustics and the theatre has been used as a venue for symphony orchestras, the building was converted as Shanghai Concert Hall.



Nanking Theatre (南京大戲院) in 1934 showing 《Tazan and His Mate》 《泰山情侶》

In order to make way for Yan'an Elevated Road, the Hall was relocated in 2007. The project embarked at 10 a.m. on April 15, and cost CNY 50 million. The 5,800 kiloton concert hall was first lifted 1.7 meters, moved east 66.4 meters, and finally lifted another 1.7 meters at the new site, using Enerpac hydraulic cylinders. The project concluded on 1 January 2008. The Shanghai Concert Hall was reopened on 26 September 2008. The entire structure is now a national second-class cultural relic, preserving its architectural culture and historical value.



Shanghai Concert Hall being moved in 2007



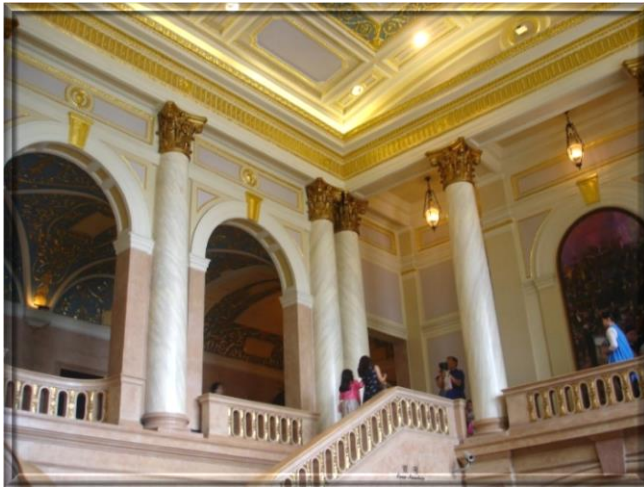
Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳) aerial view



Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳) front view



Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳) Lobby



Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳) interior views

Wartime Hub of Shanghai Rotary Club

The Nanking Theatre was once the hub of Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社) during the period of Pacific War 1941-1945. After the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, for the next five years, the Shanghai International Settlement (上海公共租界) and the French Concession (法國租界) were surrounded by Imperial Japanese forces and Chinese armies. Shanghai Rotary Club located inside the Settlement, being Home of District Governor Dr. Fong Foo-Sec (鄭富灼博士) was still alive and active, shouldering the leading role of all other clubs in the whole country in appealing for donations and coordinating the distribution of international relief toward the war refugees.

Anglo-American influence effectively ended after 8 December 1941, when the Imperial Japanese Army entered and occupied the British and American controlled parts of the city in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. After the outbreak of hostilities, Shanghai Rotary Club could only hold one regular meeting on Thursday 11 December 1941. There was a fair attendance, total 54, of all nationalities represented in the Club -- including the two Japanese members.

Subsequently, no direct steps were taken by the occupying forces to suppress the Club. But in view of the fact that the authorities at an early date after the outbreak of hostilities prohibited the holding of meetings without permission it was evident, that it would not be possible for the Club to continue its normal activities, although the Japanese Rotarians were inclined to believe that no objections would be raised by the authorities. At a meeting on the 13 December 1941, the Board of Directors decided, therefore, to go into recess for the time being "*due to financial reasons and transportation difficulties*". It was considered desirable, however, that the Club secretariat should be maintained.

For economic reasons, the Club secretariat was moved from the Metropole Hotel (No.180 Middle Jiangxi Road, Huangpu District) (都城飯店-黃浦區江西中路 180 號) to the Nanking Theatre. The management, of which was represented by Rotarian T. J. Holt (何挺然), very kindly placed office accommodation at the disposal of the Club free of charge. When the Club's paid-secretary was interned, the office was closed and put in charge of Holt, who had looked after all property and records belonging to the Club and had been able to return them completely intact at the end of the War.

President William Sung (沈嗣良) and directors met again on several occasions during the first half of the year 1942. At these meetings various routine matters were dealt with, inter alia the distribution of renovated toys, which had been collected prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War but not delivered to the various orphanages and institutions, of which the Club had been supplying with thousands of toys each Christmas for several years. The question of resuming normal activities, which would require establishing contact with the Japanese military authorities, was decided against. Members, however, for a time maintained contact with each other through informal meetings in each other's houses by rotation -- a procedure which in the circumstances was found well suited for enhancing fellowship and for the promotion of goodwill and understanding among the many nationalities of which the membership of the Club was composed. On one or two

occasions enquiries were made by officials of the Japanese occupation forces as to the nature of the Rotary Club, but these enquiries were rather easily passed off.

The Professional Services of Robert Fan

Robert Fan “Bob” (范文照) (1893-1979) was a member of Shanghai Rotary Club during the 1930s-1940s. He joined the Club on 2 December 1930 with Classification “*Construction Service – Architect*”. Architects like Hudec and Veysseyre are well-known to Shanghai Art Deco-philis. Less well-known are the Chinese architects who built 20th century Shanghai, but they left just as impressive a mark on our landscape. Prominent on this list was Robert Fan, one of the several Chinese architects to study at the University of Pennsylvania’s (UPenn) renowned architecture school.

Robert Fan, a Guangdong native, was born in Shanghai in 1893, and in 1917 graduated there with a degree in engineering from St. John’s University, Shanghai (上海聖約翰大學). After teaching at St. John’s as an engineering professor for two years, financed by scholarships he furthered his education in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., obtaining another degree in architecture in 1921, and returned to Shanghai in 1922. Fan was heavily influenced by his UPenn professor Paul Philippe Cret who was trained in the Beaux-Arts.

Upon his return to Shanghai, Fan teamed up with fellow architect and UPenn alum Zhao Chen (趙深) to open one of the first Chinese architectural practices in Shanghai. Fan began by designing buildings that incorporated both Chinese and Western elements, such as the YMCA Building with its upturned eaves and large plate-glass windows. In 1933, he completed the Yafa Court apartment complex (253–267 Wuyuan Road) (協發公寓-五原路永福路). Fan’s family owned the Art Deco buildings and lived in one for a time. But after tours to Europe and the United States in the mid-1930s, and perhaps also because of the antics of the rising Communist Party, Fan became critical of the Chinese architectural style and further embraced modern, western architecture. Shanghai’s Majestic Theater (美琪大戲院), built in 1941, is pure Art Deco, although its main lobby has since been ‘renovated’ to appear more classical than modern. Eventually Fan abandoned his Beaux-Arts training for the increasingly popular Modernist style, promoting function over aesthetics. Fan also designed the Georgia Apartments (1942) on Hengshan Road (集雅公寓-衡山路吳興路), whose clean lines and lack of ornamentation are an excellent example of the third generation of Art Deco. Among the many projects Fan was involved in the city, these buildings are still standing in Shanghai, including the YMCA Building (八仙橋基督教青年會大樓) which is now operated as Mavel Hotel Shanghai, No.123, South Tibet Road, Huangpu District (商悅青年會大酒店-黃浦區西藏南路 123 號).

Aside from his own firm, Fan worked with the government on several occasions. He served as a member of the Committee of the Nanking City Planning Bureau in 1929 and as a technical expert at the Ministry of Railways in Nanking in 1932; he was responsible for both the Railway and Health Ministries there as well. In 1924, Fan was Second Prize Winner of Architectural Competition for Dr. Sun Yat-Sen’s Mausoleum (中山陵), Nanjing; 1926 : Third Prize winner in the competition for Dr. Sun Yat-Sen’s Memorial

Auditorium in Guangzhou; 1930 : First Prize winner of the Architectural Competition for Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's Memorial Pagoda in Nanjing; 1933 : First Prize winner of the Architectural Competition for the Guangdong Provincial Government Buildings in Guangzhou (\$5,000,000 scheme).

Other public services included: 1928 : Member of Advisory Committee to the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's Mausoleum in Nanjing; Honorary adviser to the National Good Roads Association of China; Founder and First President of the Society of Chinese Architects.



Shanghai YMCA Building (八仙橋基督教青年會大樓)

(Today: Mavel Hotel Shanghai, No.123, South Tibet Road, Huangpu District)

商悅青年會大酒店 - 黃浦區西藏南路 123 號



Majestic Theater - Intersection of Jiangning Road and Fengxian Road, Jingan District, is now an excellent modern architecture protection unit in Shanghai

美琪大戲院 - 上海市靜安區江寧路/奉賢路，上海市優秀近代建築保護單位

Robert Fan in Nanjing

Designed by Robert Fan and was built in 1930-1933, the Overseas Chinese Guest House (華僑招待所) is located at No. 81, Zhongshan North Road, Gulou District, Nanjing (南京市鼓樓區中山北路 81 號). It was originally a government guest house of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, Republic of China (中華民國僑務委員會). After 1947, it was changed to a commercial hotel. From August to September 1947, it was used as the forward command post station in preparation for the Japanese Surrender Signing Ceremony in the Chinese Theater, World War II. Today it is the Jiangsu Yishiyuan Hotel (江蘇議事園酒店). It is a three-storey building with a Chinese traditional palace style in reinforced concrete structure and an imperial roof. The facade features concrete-like Chinese pillars, and the front of the entrance is wrapped in a shed.



Robert Fan in Hong Kong



Robert Fan and Pauline Siao -- 30th Wedding Anniversary (1954) in Hong Kong

In 1938, Robert Fan obtained his chartered architect qualification in the British Crown Colony Hong Kong. Robert remained in Shanghai until the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, when he migrated to Hong Kong. There, he continued his successful architectural career, with several landmark buildings to his name – including Art Deco ones. Fan was the architect who designed the Hong Kong Spinners Factory at Cheung Sha Wan (長沙灣-香港紡織有限公司), including the workers dormitories, a dining hall, a recreation area, basketball and volleyball courts and a playing field – a complex about three or four blocks long.



Fan was also involved in designing the Vitasoy Bottling Plant in Kwun Tong (觀塘-維他奶裝瓶廠). In contrast to his buildings in Shanghai, his Hong Kong buildings have mostly been torn down, such as the 1963 Sincere Department Store on Des Voeux Road, Central (德輔道中-先施百貨公司大廈). Other buildings he designed were the 1964 Silver Capital Cinema in Kwun Tong (觀塘-銀都戲院) and the Hoover Theatre and apartment complex in Causeway Bay (銅鑼灣-豪華戲院與公寓). Other works are multiple buildings for Chung Chi College at Ma Liu Shui (馬料水-崇基學院) in 1956, including the administration office, library, teaching blocks, science building, student hostels, etc. These are all gone.

One of the remaining buildings is the 1960 North Point Methodist Church (北角衛理堂), but only the interior is original — the facade was completely redone many years ago by someone else. And the Shek Kip Mei Police Station (石硤尾警署) in 1959-60 is still standing at the same site though the function is changed.



Chung Chi College (崇基學院) Campus in the 1950s-1960s, but the Fan's designed buildings are all gone in the new century except the chapel as shown in the right margin of the photo.

