

Chinese Performers in French Theater in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Shih-lung LO

Ph.D., Department of Theater Studies, Sorbonne Nouvelle University

Since the eighteenth century, Chinese drama has been known to European readers because of Prémare's French translation of *The Chinese Orphan* [*Zhaoshi guer*]. However, no Chinese performers have been found on French professional theater stage before the First Opium War (1838-1842). In this paper, I have examined the Chinese performers' activities in French theater in the second half of the nineteenth century. Based on archives and contemporary newspapers, my research begins from the program of the "Rose of Nanking" in 1851 and ends with the Chinese acrobatic show in the *Exposition universelle* in 1900. The research objects include Chinese jugglers, acrobats, musicians, actors and playwrights. The types of their performances consist of theater companies' touring, individual presentations, commercial shows, and performances given in (colonial) exhibitions. In addition, I have consulted Chinese diplomats' travelling notes, in which they have mentioned their Chinese compatriots' performances in Europe. Through a cross-reading of these documents and writings, I have tried to explore the details of the performers and performances concerned.

Keywords: Chinese performer France Nineteenth Century Jugglery
Acrobatic Show