

Awsay Strok and His Asian Tours:

The Activities of an Impresario in the Prewar Period Clarified through English Newspaper Articles in China

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The Jewish impresario Awsay Strok (Авсей Давидович Строк; b. 1876 in Dvinsk, Latvia, d. 1956 in Tokyo, Japan) lived in Shanghai between the 1910s and the 1940s. During this period, he invited world-famous musicians and dancers from Europe, Russia, and the United States to Asia, and organized numerous “Asian (Oriental) tours” that included Japan in their itinerary. The main cities covered in his Asian tours were Tokyo, Osaka, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and several colonial cities of Southeast Asia.

Strok was an impresario and a music manager. Different accounts of his activities exist in the biographies of touring artists and in articles and books detailing how Western music was received in East Asia. However, there are no studies on his life and activities. The misconception that Strok invited eminent artists only to Japan persists in Japanese publications, even though the artists he invited to Japan inevitably visited Shanghai both before and after their Japan visits, using regular travel routes. In fact, visits to Tokyo, Osaka, and Shanghai were planned as part of the set itinerary of Strok’s Asian tours.

To find information on Strok’s tours, the author searched for Strok’s name, as an impresario, in advertisements and articles about theatre in English and French newspapers published in Shanghai, namely *The China Press* and *Le Journal de Shanghai*. Moreover, information on concerts and performances produced by Strok was extracted from articles in the database “ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chinese Newspapers Collection (1832–1953).” These articles revealed that Strok organized more than 50 Asian tours during the period from 1918 to 1940. His Asian tours allowed people to experience Western music, opera, and dance performances by leading international artists, transcending national borders.