



The Diversified Development of Chinese Piano Music from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Piano music in our country has a developmental history of over a hundred years. After undergoing changes such as training in performance techniques, incorporation of indigenous musical elements, and the diversification of creative styles, piano music has emerged as one of the significant artistic forms in our nation's musical landscape. Given the inherent foreign attributes of piano art, the differences and integration between Chinese and foreign cultures and arts become essential subjects of research for the development of Chinese piano music. When viewed from a cross-cultural perspective, the dissemination of Chinese culture and art on a global scale can contribute to enhancing China's cultural soft power, boosting cultural confidence, national identity, and strengthening global recognition and acceptance of Chinese culture. The study of strategies for the creation and development of Chinese piano compositions can aid in their diversified growth within the framework of the global cultural panorama.

Keywords: Cross-cultural; Chinese piano; Diversified development

INTRODUCTION

The concept of cross-culture refers to the relationship between one culture and another. It involves recognizing and embracing cultural phenomena, customs, and habits that differ from or conflict with one's own culture. The cross-cultural perspective entails comprehending the essence of phenomena through a cross-cultural lens and seeking ways to integrate and innovate cultures. ^[1-2]Cross-culture is a product of global integration, where various countries and regions engage in cultural exchanges and fusion. Its essence lies in the creation of new cultures from the differences between cultures. Chinese piano music, as the localized expression of Western musical instrument performance art in China, is inherently tied to the cross-cultural perspective due to its developmental transformations. In the contemporary world, cultural development exhibits diverse characteristics, and the trajectory of Chinese piano music's evolution is also moving towards diversification. [3]The demands of the new era for national culture and self-confidence have prompted various cultural domains within the country to seek breakthroughs and reinforce their distinctive national characteristics for external projection. In this context, the diversified development of Chinese piano music necessitates research focused on three aspects: the current state of Chinese piano music, the disparities between domestic and foreign piano cultures, and the developmental strategies for Chinese piano music.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE PIANO WORKS

1.1 Overview of Chinese piano music history

The piano, known as the "King of Instruments," is an Italian creation attributed to Bartolomeo Cristofori, who invented it in 1709. It is a keyboard instrument within Western classical music, offering various performance styles such as solo, accompaniment, and ensemble play. According to records in the "Yuan Shi Lie Zhuan," the Italian missionary Matteo Ricci presented a struck-string ancient piano to the Ming Dynasty Emperor. Similarly, Qing Dynasty historical documents also contain relevant records of the introduction and propagation of piano art within China. [4]After the Opium Wars, numerous

foreign traders began exporting pianos to the Chinese market, leading to the gradual proliferation and utilization of the instrument within the country. By the early 20th century, the emergence of modern schools and music societies in China brought about the piano's integration as a teaching tool for music education.^[5] Its role in music education became apparent, and early piano teaching activities played a significant role in propagating and advancing piano art in China. In "A Review of Literature on the History of Chinese Piano Art," Li Haoyue divides the research literature on the history of Chinese piano art into three distinct periods based on time: the 20th century, the early 21st century (2000-2010), and the last decade of the 21st century (2010-2020).

The 20th century marked the inception of China's piano music development history. From 1919 to 1937, piano art in China experienced its initial development phase. During this time, there were only a limited number of piano compositions in China until the 1970s and 1980s when diverse creative styles began to emerge.^[6] In the fifty years following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the piano emerged as a unique artistic medium, showcasing its distinctive artistic creativity within the country. Chinese piano music gradually developed its own artistic style and gained acceptance among the general population. This period also saw the introduction of professional piano teaching programs, leading to the establishment of a steadily growing community of piano teachers. These developments laid a solid foundation for the future growth of Chinese piano music.^[7]

In the early 21st century, the development of Chinese piano music has already demonstrated a trend towards diversification. Over the past century of Chinese piano music development history, Chinese music scholars have not only translated and disseminated Western music theoretical works but have also authored numerous artistic works that have influenced the development of Chinese piano music.^[8] Concerning the specific composition and development of piano music, three main creative styles have gradually emerged in China.

The first style involves adapting piano compositions based on traditional Chinese music. The second style centers on the creation of piano works inspired by Chinese folk music. The third style features piano compositions imbued with the musical characteristics of various Chinese ethnic minority groups. During this period, the development of Chinese piano compositions exhibited characteristics of both prosperity and diversification.

From 2000 to 2010, the development of Chinese piano music entered a new phase. An increasing number of individuals recognized the significance of piano art. Coupled with the government's emphasis on the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture, the development of Chinese piano music embarked on a new mission—shouldering the fusion of Chinese and foreign cultures and artistic forms.^[9] This phase sought novel avenues for the artistic and cultural dissemination of Chinese music through the piano, aligning with the country's policies on cultural heritage and advancement.

1.2 Characteristics of Chinese piano music creation and performance

China, as an ancient and culturally rich nation, possesses a profound reservoir of traditional heritage. By organically integrating Chinese traditional culture with piano music, a distinctive Chinese style can be imbued into Western piano compositions, thus propelling innovative development within the field of piano art in China.^[1] During the initial stages of the introduction of piano art to China, it distinctly displayed Western musical characteristics, a phenomenon commonly observed when foreign cultures are assimilated. Meanwhile, China's indigenous traditional music culture is deeply influenced by the nation's unique circumstances and traditional cultural system.^[10] This culture is closely intertwined with distinctive features of Chinese civilization, such as the aesthetic beauty of mood and the subtlety of expression. Consequently, the evolution and development of piano music in China are an ongoing process of integrating Western musical traits with elements of traditional Chinese music.

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When examining the performance concepts of Chinese piano compositions, they are closely intertwined with China's native cultural heritage. The use of functional harmony and the portrayal of tonal colors are largely grounded in the expression of ethnic melodies. This approach is particularly prevalent in dance pieces within the repertoire of Chinese piano music.

In terms of performance characteristics, Chinese piano compositions place a significant emphasis on the beauty of mood. This goes beyond focusing solely on the melody and technical aspects of the musical piece. Instead, it underscores the artistic experience that the composition imparts to the listeners.^[12] This immersive experience aims to evoke a strong sense of presence and empathy, fostering vivid mental imagery and emotional resonance. Such an approach places high demands on the pianist's performance technique, touch, and emotional expression. Appreciating piano compositions is an auditory aesthetic experience, and performing the piano is an artistic endeavor that combines intellectual and physical effort.

The technical characteristics of both composition and performance in Chinese piano music involve the creation of mood, unique performance arrangements, and the fusion of various musical elements.^[13] To delve into the new directions of development and transformation in Chinese piano music, a clear and comprehensive understanding of the distinctiveness of

Chinese piano music works is essential. Only by building upon the artistic achievements within the existing history of Chinese piano music can researchers thoroughly explore the avenues for the ongoing development and evolution of Chinese piano music.^[14] This understanding serves as the foundation for such investigations.

2. DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF CHINESE AND FOREIGN PIANO CULTURE

2.1 Differences between Chinese and foreign piano cultures

Piano music itself originated in Western countries, and prior to its introduction to China, Western piano music had a history of development spanning several centuries. The emergence of Western piano culture is closely linked to the historical cultures, intellectual styles, and expressive philosophies of the regions where it gained popularity. Through the exploration and practice of numerous Western musicians and pianists, Western piano art had already established a complete musical system with its unique foundation in music theory. During the initial stages of piano introduction to China, the country lacked a systematic and distinct theoretical framework for piano music. Emphasis was primarily placed on technical training. It was only later that efforts gradually began to search for a development direction that would bring about the localization of piano compositions within China.^[15]

The development of Western piano compositions can be divided into several distinct periods. The first stage occurred during the Baroque era, followed by the Classical music period. Due to the cultural context of capitalist societies, piano culture remained somewhat exclusive for a considerable period of time, requiring a certain level of understanding of social culture and musical foundations to appreciate piano art fully. In the later stages, the emergence of the Romantic movement, followed by Impressionism and modern music, imparted a broader societal dimension to Western piano music. This evolution saw an increasing emphasis on the release of inner emotions and dynamic artistic expression. What was initially an abstract and sophisticated art form gradually transformed into a more accessible form of musical expression, resonating with a wider audience.

In the development journey of Chinese piano art, piano compositions combine Western piano playing techniques with Chinese indigenous musical concepts, resulting in distinct performance forms and styles. Taking the example of the Chinese piano masterpiece "Er Quan Ying Yue" (Moon Reflected on Second Spring), it is an adaptation of the traditional Chinese erhu piece "Er Quan Ying Yue." This composition is rich in Chinese ethnic musical colors, while also integrating piano performance techniques and styles. It stands as a bold attempt to blend Eastern and Western elements. The emergence of "Er Quan Ying Yue" exemplifies how Chinese piano compositions express both ethnic characteristics and emotions. The composer did not simply transpose the original piece or adopt typical Western musical forms. Instead, they combined elements of both traditions, retaining the variation structure of the original piece while refining the overall structure. The tonality of "Er Quan Ying Yue" employs a Chinese pentatonic scale, vividly capturing the unique style of Chinese ethnic music.

The differences between Western and Chinese piano compositions are notably reflected in their compositional structures, tonalities, performance styles, and moods. This highlights that the evolution of piano compositions in different countries and regions is inherently intertwined with their respective local customs and cultures.

2. 2 Influence of the current world cultural pattern on the development of Chinese piano music

In today's world, humanity's ways of production and life are undergoing immense changes. The development and shifts in the global cultural landscape are intimately tied to exchanges in politics, economics, and more. The diversity displayed in the global cultural landscape presents new opportunities and challenges for the growth and development of cultures worldwide. To enhance the global recognition of Chinese culture within the world context and elevate the soft power of our nation's culture, China's cultural creation and export must emphasize ethnic characteristics and cultural spirit. On this foundation, the development of Chinese piano music must inevitably prioritize the expression of ideological and value concepts. In the global landscape, the trend toward integration of political, economic, and cultural factors demands that each country and region enhance their comprehensive national strength and core competitiveness. The intensifying struggle of ideologies also tests the innovative abilities of each country and region in terms of the specific artistic expressions that serve as carriers of culture. Similarly, in the development of Chinese piano compositions, while preserving unique national cultural elements, there's a need to adapt to the trend of global artistic and cultural exchange and integration, seeking breakthroughs that align with modernization and internationalization.

In the current landscape where Chinese piano compositions are increasingly evolving into distinct national musical works, how to effectively disseminate Chinese piano compositions as representatives of national culture on a global scale and ensure their competitiveness and influence is a crucial concern in the development of Chinese piano art. The development of Chinese piano compositions relies on the attention given to piano art education in contemporary Chinese society. The cultivation of new talents provides a continuous stream of energy for the flourishing of the piano industry and the dissemination of piano works. It is only when Chinese pianists and piano compositions continuously innovate on the international stage and shine brightly that the global population can gain a deeper understanding of the profound concepts behind Chinese piano culture. This understanding will then foster love and recognition for Chinese art and culture from a broader perspective.

3. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF CHINESE PIANO MUSIC FROM A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Building upon the previous discussion, the development of Chinese piano music requires a concerted effort to integrate a cross-cultural perspective. By combining the strengths of Western and Chinese musical arts while retaining ethnic characteristics and promoting cultural heritage, the goal is to achieve a clear and deeply resonating understanding of Chinese piano compositions among people worldwide. The increasing level of economic globalization has led to closer connections and interactions among countries and regions around the world, making cultural diversity and pluralism crucial issues in the realm of global cultural exchange. From a cross-cultural perspective, the future direction of Chinese piano music's development can be explored through three key aspects: the innovation of Chinese piano education, the innovation of piano music composition, and the innovation of the conceptualization and modes of dissemination of Chinese piano music works. By incorporating these considerations, Chinese piano music can evolve in a way that not only respects tradition but also embraces the contemporary global cultural landscape, enabling it to establish its unique position and recognition on the international stage.

3.1 Innovation of Chinese piano education

Cross-cultural music education should begin by identifying the commonalities among different musical cultures and then, on that shared foundation, seek out the differences. This approach deepens the understanding of each other's cultures. In other words, the demand for innovation from a cross-cultural perspective implies the fusion of Chinese traditional music with Western music. This involves not only promoting local music culture but also ensuring that people around the world can grasp the fundamentals of Chinese traditional music culture. Therefore, in the context of China's current piano education reform, the concept of integrating Chinese and Western elements should be communicated to piano learners, primarily in terms of piano performance and creative concepts. The innovation in Chinese piano education can be broadly categorized into the innovation of piano playing techniques and the innovation of piano composition styles.

3.1.1 Innovation of piano performance

Innovating piano playing techniques is closely tied to the proficient mastery of fundamental piano skills by learners. Within this context, the aspect of tonal quality in piano performance holds particular significance. Notably, Chinese ethnic music places a strong emphasis on the richness of tonal colors. To innovate piano playing techniques, inspiration can be drawn from the performance techniques of traditional Chinese instruments. Examples such as "Erquan Yingyue" and "Xiyang Xiaogu" incorporate simulated representations of traditional Chinese instruments like the erhu, guzheng, and drums. Therefore, piano playing can be enriched by exploring variations in tonal colors, aiming to align with the sensibilities of ethnic music. This approach involves altering the musical lines through diverse tonal qualities, enabling listeners to experience the nuanced and varied forms of piano performance technique while evoking associations with distinctive Chinese cultural elements.

3.1.2 Innovation of piano creation style

The creation of piano pieces rich in Chinese ethnic characteristics must place a strong emphasis on both the depth of content and the artistic conception. This challenge not only tests the creator's ability to infuse these elements into their work but also tests the performer's capacity to express them. Take the piano composition "The Butterfly Lovers" as an example. This piano piece represents the lyrical genre of Chinese piano music and, similar to "A Moonlit Night on the Spring River," its creation is rooted in traditional Chinese culture and unique ethnic emotions, strongly reflecting historical and stylistic characteristics and carrying a distinct ethnic flavor. Innovations in piano composition style should be grounded in local culture. The graceful and melodious melody plays a crucial role in conveying classical aesthetics. The effectiveness of conveying meaning and artistic conception relies on the emotional resonance the piece creates in the listeners. Existing outstanding piano compositions predominantly draw from traditional music and ethnic influences. To innovate in piano composition style, inspiration can be drawn from modern music while harnessing the strengths of traditional music and ethnic influences.

3.2 Innovation of Chinese piano music creation

In conjunction with the innovation in music education, there is a need for corresponding innovative concepts in the creation of Chinese piano music. From a cross-cultural perspective, the composition of Chinese piano music lacks originality in terms of modern Chinese music. Many of the existing renowned Chinese piano pieces still stem from transformations of traditional classical compositions, yet they lack the incorporation of contemporary cultural content and the representation of diverse musical genres of our time.

The brilliance of musical compositions is closely tied to the strong personal style of the creators. The current repertoire of musical works in our country can be broadly categorized into four types. First is the lyrical genre represented by "Spring River Moonlit Night," which emphasizes the expression of emotions and the aesthetic of cultural connotations. Through auditory means, it creates sensory experiences and conveys the beauty of imagery. Second is the march genre represented by "Defend the Yellow River," characterized by upbeat and soaring melodies that use rhythmic vigor to portray a grand and powerful ambience, combining the forces of nature and humanity. Third is the category of various dance pieces with distinct ethnic colors, abundant in strong rhythmic qualities, and joyful emotional expressions, featuring pronounced regional characteristics. Fourth, there are serene and solemn hymns primarily showcasing sublime sentiments from different eras and occasions. However, within these aforementioned categories of piano compositions, the personal styles of the creators are not distinct enough. This implies that in the process of disseminating piano works, the understanding of China's musical culture remains vague and the impressions lack vivid depth. This calls for bold attempts in the innovative development of Chinese piano compositions, transitioning from a focus on adapting ancient tunes to utilizing traditional music elements as source materials, and exploring potential combinations with contemporary musical expressions in today's society.

3.3 Innovation in the communication ideas and methods of Chinese piano music works

Innovative creation is a crucial foundation for the global dissemination of Chinese piano music compositions, while the export of performing talents is an important avenue for spreading these compositions. When Western renowned pianists are mentioned^[16], people often think of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, and subsequently their representative works and musical styles. However, when it comes to well-known Chinese pianists on a global scale, figures like Lang Lang and Li Yundi, who excel in their performance techniques, typically come to mind. Even for creative pianists like Wu Yili, it's challenging for their compositional and performance styles to be emphasized and showcased during the dissemination process. To effectively export exceptional Chinese piano music compositions worldwide, nurturing and presenting talents is crucial. This encompasses not only composers and performers of piano pieces but also individuals skilled in the creation and dissemination of Chinese piano music theory. Creation, expression, and dissemination form an integrated process of presenting a work. Only by valuing and implementing each step can the desired outcome be ultimately achieved.^[17]

Therefore, the dissemination philosophy of Chinese piano music compositions must be rooted in traditional Chinese culture, guided by the overall direction of cultural output, while also emphasizing the cultivation of talents responsible for spreading this art form. The methods of disseminating Chinese piano music compositions should be explored based on this philosophy. With the advancement of technology and the global trend of globalization in the economic and cultural landscape, the means of dissemination, especially through the internet, cannot be overlooked for any form of culture or artistic work. From a cross-cultural perspective, spreading indigenous works to a global audience demonstrates a nation's cultural soft power. The dissemination of Chinese piano music compositions not only relies on physical performances on the world stage but is equally reliant on widespread awareness and reach. Leveraging the transmission capabilities of the internet can make presenting music compositions more convenient and swift. Therefore, the dissemination forms of piano compositions can indeed be combined with online communication methods.^[18]

In conclusion, the diversified development of Chinese piano music compositions is intricately linked to the current understanding of piano development in the music field, the sensitivity to reforms in piano education and composition, and strategic research that combines cultural exchange and dissemination from a global perspective. While language differences can hinder global cultural exchange, music has the power to transcend linguistic barriers, serving as a means of sensory output for mood, thought, and emotion. The development of Chinese piano music is a significant and enduring endeavor that requires collective efforts from society and its people. In summary, the evolution of Chinese piano music compositions demands continuous innovation in practice. It involves drawing from the essence of Chinese classical music and Western music, incorporating contemporary elements and regional characteristics, and innovating both compositional styles and performance methods. By doing so, Chinese piano music can forge new directions for the export of musical culture.

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