



The Application of Traditional Chinese Music Elements in Piano Works -- The Specific Application of Score Traditional Element

Ye Yang*

¹Lecturer at the Normal College of Xuzhou University of Technology, St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music DMA Xuzhou, China, 221111

* **Corresponding Author:** yangye7107@163.com

Citation: Yang, Y. (2025). The Application of Traditional Chinese Music Elements in Piano Works -- The Specific Application of Score Traditional Element. *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 25(1), 435-440.

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 May 2024

Accepted: 15 Aug 2024

ABSTRACT

In the context of globalization in music, the application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works is increasing day by day, injecting a unique Eastern charm into piano music. This article focuses on the specific application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works, and explores their contributions to the exchange and development of music between China and the West.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese music; Elements; Piano works; apply

INTRODUCTION

With the continuous deepening of globalization, the integration of traditional Chinese music elements into the field of piano music has become a significant trend. This fusion is not just a simple cultural blending, but also a deep cultural dialogue and mutual penetration. The introduction of traditional Chinese music elements injects a unique Eastern charm into piano music, allowing this instrument, which originally belonged to Western classical music, to express the unique beauty and emotions of Chinese music. In this process, piano works not only absorb the techniques and expressive power of Western music, but also integrate the charm and artistic conception of Eastern art, showcasing the infinite possibilities of cross-cultural creation. By applying traditional musical elements, composers are able to convey the rich historical and cultural traditions of the Chinese nation in their works. This cross-cultural creative approach is not only a respect and inheritance of traditional culture, but also an exploration and practice of music and art innovation.

1. THE VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MUSIC ELEMENTS IN PIANO WORKS

The essence of Chinese traditional music is integrated into the piano music, and its cultural value and far-reaching significance are self-evident. The ingenious integration of Chinese traditional music elements into the piano repertoire contains extremely important significance and value. The integration of Chinese traditional music elements into the creation of piano music can effectively carry forward and continue the Chinese music culture. For example, the well-known piano music *Yellow River* is an outstanding representative of the perfect integration of Chinese traditional music elements and modern piano playing skills. In this work, the theme of *Jasmine* not only vividly presents the unique style of Chinese national music, but also makes people around the world more deeply understand and love Chinese traditional music. In the field of artistic innovation, combining traditional Chinese music elements with piano music creation has opened up a new path for the innovation of piano works, promoting the progress of the piano music industry. Music creators have cleverly integrated traditional Chinese music elements, subverted the traditional piano creation pattern, and created music works that are both personalized and unique. The collection of "Eight Piano Songs" released by piano composer Zhao Xiaosheng incorporates numerous ethnic elements in music lines, tonal layout, and architectural design, presenting a unique artistic style. On the stage of blending Chinese and Western music, traditional Chinese music elements shine brightly, not only deepening international music dialogue, but also adding unique scenery to the global journey of piano music. The *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, co created by pianist Yin Chengzong and German composer, integrates traditional Chinese music with Western creative techniques and has become a highly acclaimed masterpiece internationally. This work has made outstanding contributions to enhancing the dialogue between Chinese and Western music.

(1) Cultural inheritance

Integrating the essence of Chinese traditional music into the piano repertoire can not only continue the chapter of national music, but also allow the traditional notes to transcend boundaries and win wider recognition and love. This combination makes Chinese traditional music more widely promoted, thus further promoting the cultural heritage of the nation. For example, internationally renowned pianist Li Yundi frequently plays piano works inspired by "Jasmine Flower" on domestic and foreign music stages, making the notes of this popular traditional Chinese song widely circulated worldwide, thereby enhancing foreign friends' perception of Chinese music. This cross disciplinary artistic attempt has given new vitality to classical music, inspiring more young people to be curious and passionate about traditional Chinese music. Taking Wang Lili, a student living at the Central Conservatory of Music in the capital city, as an example, her creation of "Five Tang Poems" combines the poetry and melody of Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu with the piano, opening a window for young listeners to experience and understand traditional Chinese culture. This cultural inheritance is not simply copying or copying, but developing and performing through innovation, allowing traditional Chinese music to take on new forms and enhance in modern society. The piano piece "Ode to the Yellow River" cleverly combines the essence of traditional Chinese music with the performance techniques of Western classical music, interpreting the historical and cultural essence of the Chinese nation, and allowing global audiences to appreciate the unique charm of Chinese music.

(2) Artistic innovation

Integrating the essence of Chinese music into piano works injects a unique artistic innovation into piano music creation. This innovation is not only reflected in the style and structure of music works, but also profoundly affects the depth of their internal meaning and cultural communication. Music creators explore the integration of the fifth, sixth, and seventh scales, as well as unique modes such as palace, shang, jiao, zheng, and yu in traditional Chinese music, into piano music, creating distinctive harmonic effects and infectious emotional transmission. Directly injecting ethnic melodies into piano works, or cleverly applying the performance techniques of ethnic instruments to piano performance, such as imitating the overtones of guzheng, the sliding and vibrato of erhu, etc., this innovative exploration greatly enhances the expressive power of piano music. Piano creators cleverly incorporate structures such as variations and loops commonly found in traditional music into their works, allowing these works to showcase the organization and aesthetics of traditional Chinese music within a framework. This unique artistic attempt not only opens up a new way of thinking for the progress of Chinese piano music, but also contributes to the richness and diversity of global music civilization, advancing hand in hand. This innovative method has been fully demonstrated in practical examples. Pianist Mr. Zhang created "Jasmine Fantasy", in which he skillfully weaves the melody of "Jasmine" into the piano melody and innovates the harmony and structure of the accompaniment with exquisite craftsmanship. As a result, this work not only radiates a strong national flavor, but also reveals a profound artistic atmosphere. This innovative artistic exploration undoubtedly injects new vitality into the development of piano music. The in-depth exploration of this artistic innovation undoubtedly injects new vitality and energy into piano music.

(3) Cross cultural exchange

Integrating traditional Chinese music elements into piano repertoire not only enriches the inherent cultural heritage of piano music, but also greatly promotes the interaction and cooperation of Eastern and Western music cultures. By incorporating the essence of traditional Chinese music into piano works, using ethnic melodies, unique pentatonic scales, imitation of traditional instrument tones, and unique harmonies, the music exhibits a strong Eastern flavor in harmony, melody layout, and architecture. This cross-cultural creative approach not only brings an unprecedented auditory feast to Western music fans, but also reveals the unique charm and new realm of Western music to Eastern music fans. Taking the representative of renowned piano artist Tan Dun as an example, his "Yellow River Piano Concerto" showcases the essence of Chinese music and the harmonious blend of Western piano styles, becoming a classic work. This piece draws inspiration from the melody of the Yellow River Cantata and incorporates the scale elements of traditional Chinese music, allowing the work to retain the structure of Western music while showcasing a strong national style. The performance and dissemination of this work on a global scale have not only received high praise, but also played a huge role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between traditional Chinese music and Western music. Taking piano artist Wang Yujia as an example, she excels in skillfully using various unique playing techniques and timbre effects to simulate the sounds of traditional Chinese instruments, such as the crisp overtones of the guzheng, the melodious glides and tremolo of the erhu, etc., while retaining the basic style of Western classical music, her music is endowed with a distinct Eastern color. Her unique playing style not only wins the favor of Eastern music fans, but also allows Western music fans to experience an unprecedented auditory feast, contributing to the interaction and collaboration of Chinese and Western music cultures.

3、THE SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS IN SCORING

(1) The integration of ethnic melodies

In the field of modern music creation, cleverly integrating traditional Chinese music elements into piano works has become a popular art creation method. This is not only a common case of cross-cultural communication, but also a manifestation of in-depth exploration and innovative practice in the art field. Incorporating ethnic tunes into piano pieces is actually a cross-cultural exchange, which not only deepens the understanding and appreciation of different cultures, but also fundamentally promotes the diversification and progress of music.

In the piano repertoire, the integration of China's national tune "Jasmine Flower" has become a distinct example. As one of the representatives of Chinese culture, this song is renowned worldwide for its concise and beautiful melody. Piano artist Zhao Cong cleverly integrates the melody of "Jasmine Flower" into her piano creations, not only demonstrating her profound understanding of national melody, but also showcasing her piano artistic talent for breaking through tradition and daring to

innovate. Her music chapters, in the interweaving of harmony and melody, not only retain the original style of folk songs, but also bring new vitality and charm to piano music.

Zhao Cong's creative techniques are not only a tribute to traditional Chinese culture, but also an exploration of modern music language. In this process, ethnic melodies no longer exist in isolation, but are deeply integrated with Western piano instruments. This is not only a superficial combination between the two musical elements, but also a deeper reflection of the mutual infiltration of spirit and culture. Based on "Jasmine Flower", Zhao Cong innovatively rewrote the melody, revealing how to maintain the unique characteristics of national culture and the possibility of interaction and communication with other cultures in the wave of globalization. Of course, to create such music integration, music creators must have a solid music foundation and a thorough understanding of local music. This not only requires music creators to be proficient in the modes, beats, and performance methods of ethnic music, but also to have a thorough understanding of the acoustics, construction, and progress of piano music. When creating, musicians need to grasp a compromise plan, so that the fusion works not only retain the charm of ethnic music, but also build the structure of piano music. In the process of integration, the infectious power of music cannot be ignored. Music is not only a simple combination of melody and harmony, but also a gushing of emotions and a carrier of ideas. In Zhao Cong's creation, the softness and lyricism of "Jasmine Flower" are fully expressed through the harmony, timbre, and performance skills of the piano. Musicians deeply explore the expressive power of music, allowing national melodies to regain vitality in piano music.

Embedding traditional Chinese music elements into piano repertoire not only enriches the connotation of music culture, but also opens up new paths for music creation. This integration not only promotes the popularization and diffusion of traditional Chinese culture, but also injects new notes and reflections into the global music field. Originating from the creative expression of musicians, it is expected to produce more piano masterpieces that integrate local charm and global perspectives, and thus contribute to the prosperity of global music culture.

(2) The application of ethnic modes

Integrating the notes of traditional Chinese culture into piano music has formed a profound and wide-ranging research topic. In these aspects, the use of ethnic modes is particularly eye-catching. The unique system of traditional Chinese music is based on the five tone, six tone, and seven tone scales, and forms a rigorous scale framework with the five fundamental notes of Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zheng, and Yu. In the accumulation of music spanning thousands of years, this architecture has shaped unique phonological symbols and communication techniques. When these music creators integrate the unique scales of the nation into piano music, they not only bring diversity to music, but also achieve cultural breakthroughs and creative leaps. This innovative process not only demonstrates the admiration and inheritance of traditional ethnic music by music artists, but also exposes their exploration and practice in the context of modern music.

Taking the piano piece "Yellow River" as an example, it is a brilliant gem of Chinese piano music. This creator extensively incorporates the key elements of traditional Chinese ethnic music in his creations, especially using the scales of five notes, six notes, and seven notes, as well as the five basic notes of palace, shang, jiao, zheng, and yu. With the clever use of ethnic modes, the piano piece "Yellow River" showcases a strong Eastern flavor, presenting a unique and charming Chinese music style to the audience. In this work, one can hear the melody outline of "Jasmine Flower" and also feel the use of the fifth, sixth, and seventh scales in traditional Chinese music. The use of modes with ethnic characteristics not only imbues the work with an Eastern flavor, but also endows it with a unique musical language and deep emotional significance. This music display that integrates ethnic characteristics with piano melodies carries deep emotional connotations, witnessing musicians' deep grasp and creative transformation of the essence of ethnic music. For example, the piano piece "Chasing the Moon with Colorful Clouds" also demonstrates how ethnic modes are integrated into piano works. This creator skillfully integrates the national pentatonic scale with Western piano performance techniques, thus achieving the preservation of ethnic customs and the expression of piano music emotions in the work. Through unique integration, "Chasing the Moon with Colorful Clouds" is endowed with strong poetic charm, shining with distinct ethnic characteristics.

From the above examples, it is evident that incorporating traditional Chinese ethnic modes into piano works is of great significance. The use of this technique not only imbues the piano piece with a strong Eastern flavor, but also endows the work with a unique musical language and profound emotional significance. In the context of global music integration, the dialogue between Chinese and Western music using ethnic scales has become an important link to promote the innovation and progress of piano works. With the unique modes of traditional Chinese music such as Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zheng, and Yu, as well as the pentatonic, sixth, and seventh scales, piano works display a completely different harmony effect and emotional transmission from Western music. This harmony coordination and emotional transmission make piano works show a unique musical style and artistic courage. This unique style not only represents the inheritance and development of ethnic music, but also demonstrates the innovation and research of modern music language.

In the combination of traditional Chinese music elements and piano works, the use of ethnic modes occupies a crucial position. The use of this technique not only fills the piano music with an Eastern atmosphere, but also endows the work with a unique musical language and deep emotional significance. In the global village style music atmosphere, the use of ethnic scales is the link between the interaction and evolution of Chinese and Western music, giving rise to a new trend in piano works. This innovation and progress not only help promote the popularization and dissemination of Chinese ethnic culture, but also inject new notes and observation perspectives into the international music field.

(3) Imitation of ethnic musical instruments

In the application of traditional Chinese musical elements in piano works, imitating the sounds of ethnic instruments is an important and challenging task. As a Western instrument, the piano has essential differences in timbre and expressive power compared to traditional Chinese instruments. However, some composers have successfully imitated the timbre and performance

style of Chinese ethnic instruments through exquisite techniques and innovative performance methods. Composer Chen Gang successfully integrated the performance techniques of the erhu into his piano performance by imitating the sliding and vibrato notes of the traditional Chinese instrument erhu in his piano work "Yellow River". In his work, Chen Gang cleverly utilized the piano's timbre and performance techniques, imitating the unique timbre and emotional expression of the erhu, making the work have distinct national characteristics. This imitation not only requires composers to have a deep understanding of the timbre and performance techniques of ethnic instruments, but also to use the characteristics of the piano, a Western instrument, to approach and reproduce the uniqueness of ethnic instruments. Another example is pianist Li Yundi, who also demonstrated excellent ability to imitate ethnic instruments while playing traditional Chinese music works. When playing "Jasmine Flower", he cleverly utilized the piano's tone and performance techniques, imitating the overtones and melodic lines of the guzheng, allowing the work to showcase the unique charm of the piano while maintaining its original ethnic characteristics. This way of imitating ethnic musical instruments not only enhances the artistic expression of piano works, but also allows the audience to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese music.

Imitating the performance style of ethnic instruments requires composers to have a deep understanding and mastery of the timbre and performance techniques of ethnic instruments. This not only includes familiarity with the basic performance techniques of musical instruments, but also understanding the changes in timbre, emotional expression, and other aspects of the instruments. Through a deep understanding of ethnic instruments, composers can accurately imitate the timbre and performance style of ethnic instruments in piano works, making the works have distinct ethnic characteristics.

In addition, imitating the performance style of ethnic instruments also requires the creative skills of composing furniture and preparing piano music. Innovation is needed in the harmony, melody, rhythm, and other aspects of piano music to achieve accurate imitation of ethnic instruments. This innovation not only requires the basic skills of composing furniture and music creation, but also requires a profound understanding of the expressive power of piano music. Through in-depth exploration of the expressive power of piano music, composers can integrate the timbre and performance style of ethnic instruments into their piano works, adding unique artistic charm to the works.

Imitating the performance style of ethnic instruments is not only a challenge to the composer's musical skills and creative ability, but also an exploration of the expressive power of piano music. This exploration not only helps to promote and disseminate Chinese national culture, but also injects new vitality and creativity into the development of piano music. By integrating the timbre and performance style of ethnic instruments into piano works, composers have successfully combined traditional Chinese music elements with Western instruments, injecting new vitality and creativity into the development of piano music.

In short, imitating the sounds of ethnic instruments is of great significance in the application of traditional Chinese musical elements in piano works. This imitation not only requires composers to have a deep understanding and mastery of the timbre and performance techniques of ethnic instruments, but also to possess the creative skills and expressive power of piano music. Through this imitation, composers can integrate the timbre and performance style of ethnic instruments into piano works, adding unique artistic charm to the works and promoting the development of piano music.

(4) The fusion of ethnic harmony

In the application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works, the integration of ethnic harmony is an important aspect. This fusion is not just about simply incorporating the harmony characteristics of traditional Chinese music into piano works, but also creating a novel harmony structure based on understanding and absorbing the harmony of traditional Chinese music.

Composer Chen Gang cleverly incorporated the fifth degree cyclic harmony of traditional Chinese music into his piano piece "Yellow River". This kind of harmony not only reflects the characteristics of traditional Chinese music, but also brings unique emotional expression to the work. In traditional Chinese music, the harmonic progression of the fifth degree cycle is a common structure that can create broad and deep sound effects, giving people a sense of solemnity and grandeur. Chen Gang used this characteristic in "The Yellow River" to present a unique sense of hierarchy and tension in harmony, enhancing the emotional expression of the work. In addition, composer Tan Dun used Chinese characteristic seventh chords in his piano piece "Fire Festival", which presented a novel structure in harmony. Seventh degree chords are not commonly seen in traditional Chinese music, but in Tan Dun's works, he cleverly combines seventh degree chords with traditional harmonies to create a distinctive harmonic effect. The application of this innovation in harmony enables piano works to maintain Western musical traditions while also possessing distinct national characteristics. Through these cases, we can see the application of the fusion of ethnic harmony in piano works, which not only enriches the expression forms of traditional Chinese music elements, but also provides new possibilities and directions for the development of piano music. This fusion practice demonstrates the unique value and significance of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works, and also builds a bridge for the exchange and development of Chinese and Western music.

Combining the harmonic characteristics of traditional Chinese music, such as the use of fifth degree cyclic harmonies and distinctive seventh degree chords, to create novel harmonic structures for piano works. This harmonic structure not only retains the characteristics of ethnic music, but also showcases the expressive power of piano music. Through this fusion, composers can create piano works with national characteristics and international perspectives, bringing new sounds and perspectives to the world music stage.

In short, the integration of ethnic harmony is of great significance in the application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works. This fusion not only requires composers to have a deep understanding and mastery of the harmonic characteristics of ethnic music, but also to possess the creative skills of piano music. Through this fusion, composers can create novel harmonic

structures, add unique artistic charm to piano works, and promote the development of piano music. This development not only helps to promote and disseminate Chinese national culture, but also brings new voices and perspectives to the world music stage.

(5) Drawing inspiration from the structure of ethnic music

In the application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works, the reference of ethnic music structure is an important aspect. This kind of borrowing is not just about simply adopting the structural forms of traditional Chinese music, but also creating new works with piano music characteristics based on understanding and digesting these structures. For example, composer Chen Gang drew inspiration from the variation style of traditional Chinese music in his piano piece "Hundred Birds Facing the Phoenix". The original song is based on the melody of the traditional Chinese instrument suona. In piano music, Chen Gang imitates and reproduces the timbre and performance techniques of suona. For example, he utilized a lot of jumping and decorative sounds, as well as sliding and vibrato techniques that mimic suona performance. These elements present the logic and beauty of traditional Chinese music in the structure of the work. Based on the melody of the traditional Chinese instrument suona, the work imitates and reproduces the timbre and performance techniques of the suona through the piano, a Western instrument. In this work, Chen Gang cleverly combines the structure of traditional Chinese music with the expressive power of modern piano music, making the work both ethnic and modern. Another example is the piano piece "Yellow River Piano Concerto", which was co created by composers such as Yin Chengzong and Chu Wanghua. "Yellow River Piano Concerto": This work was co created by composers such as Yin Chengzong and Chu Wanghua, drawing inspiration from the loop form in traditional Chinese music. In the work, some melodies from the Yellow River Cantata were adopted and adapted into a piano concerto. Structurally, the work presents the logic and beauty of traditional Chinese music. For example, in the first movement, the piano solo section utilizes a large number of ethnic music elements, such as jumping melodies and distinctive rhythms, which are intertwined with the harmony of the orchestra, showcasing the beauty of traditional Chinese music. Drawing inspiration from the loop style of traditional Chinese music, some melodies from the Yellow River Cantata have been adapted and integrated into the piano concerto. This work presents the logic and beauty of traditional Chinese music in its structure, while also showcasing the charm and expressive power of piano music. These cases indicate that borrowing from the structure of ethnic music can not only enrich the expressive power of piano music, but also promote the integration and development of piano music and traditional music. Through in-depth research and understanding of the structure of ethnic music, piano composers can create more distinctive and innovative works, contributing to the prosperity and development of piano music. Adopting common structural forms in traditional Chinese music, such as variations and loops, piano works present the logic and beauty of traditional Chinese music in structure. The specific application of these elements not only reflects the value of cultural inheritance, but also promotes artistic innovation and cross-cultural communication. The integration of traditional Chinese music elements has made piano works a bridge for dialogue between Chinese and Western music, enriching the expressive power and cultural connotations of piano music.

SUMMARY

This article delves into the application of traditional Chinese music elements in piano works and their important role in the exchange and development of music between China and the West. Through analysis, it can be seen that the integration of traditional Chinese music elements has brought unique Eastern charm to piano music, and this integration is a reflection of cultural dialogue and mutual penetration, rather than a simple cultural mix. The application of these elements not only helps to inherit and promote Chinese national culture, but also promotes artistic innovation in piano music and promotes communication and cooperation between Chinese and Western music. The integration of traditional Chinese music elements has broadened the international perspective of piano music and contributed to the diversity and common prosperity of world music culture.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lin Bijia. The Inheritance and Innovation of Traditional Chinese Music Culture in Piano Performance Works [J]. Journal of Suihua University, 2023,43 (12): 85-87
- [2] Chang Liwen. The Integration of Traditional Chinese Opera Music Elements in Chinese Piano Works [J]. Zhongguancun, 2023, (10): 100-101
- [3] Chu Chu. The Integration and Application of Ethnic Music Elements in Chinese Piano Works [J]. Art Review, 2023, (08): 33-35