

# A Study on the Expressive Techniques of National Styles in the Performance of Chinese Piano Works

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**Abstract:** Piano works, especially good ones, and the aural feast they convey can bring spiritual enjoyment to people. As an exotic product, piano has the title of “King of Musical Instruments” among many musical instruments, which shows its influence. Chinese piano works based on Chinese national and folk music are loved by the masses due to their strong ethnic characteristics. Therefore, this article mainly discusses the degree of grasping the national style in the performance of Chinese piano works, and promotes the sustainable development of Chinese piano music culture.

## 1. Introduction

From the perspective of the dissemination and expression of national culture, music and art are an important carrier and embodiment of national culture. In the field of culture and art, different forms of musical art and types of musical instruments play different roles in the synchronous dissemination and development of music and culture. As a type of Western musical instrument, piano integrates elements of national style into its musical works and forms of expression, which is a typical embodiment of the diversified development of practical culture and the promotion of national culture.

## 2. The Formation of the National Style of Chinese Piano Music

In the late 19th century, Western music such as piano, violin, and harmony was introduced into China, and gradually became known and recognized by Chinese people. After the May 4th Movement, Chinese music creation began to move towards specialization, and many musicians began to try Western music creation techniques, and created many piano pieces with national flavor, such as Zhao Yuanren's *March for Peace* and *Children's March*, Xiao Youmei's *New Nishang Feather Dance*, Shen Yangtian's *Naivat*, and so on. These music works have a rigorous structure, small space, and simple harmony, presenting a distinct classical music style.

In the 1930s, the creative techniques of Chinese piano music gradually matured, and its music creation was close to the European romantic music style. Many piano music works were exquisite, vivid, exquisite, and elegant, depicting beautiful natural scenery, expressing the composer's delicate inner emotions, and displaying a strong romantic color. For example, He Luting's *Shepherd Boy's Piccolo*, Jiang Dingxian's *Cradle*, Chen Tianhe's *Overture*, Ding Shande's *Happy Holiday*, Yu Benmin's *Variations in C minor*, and so on.

After the liberation, composers have eulogized the new era with full enthusiasm, creating many musical works with smooth melody, distinct rhythm, and simple harmony. These works are mostly based on folk music or adapted from national music. For example, Shang Deyi's *Happy Harvest*, Shi Fu's *Kashgar Dance*, Wang Jianzhong's *Five Yunnan Folk Songs*, Chen Peixun's *Autumn Moon on Pinghu Lake*, Sun Yiqiang's *Dancing Grain*, Chu Wanghua's *Two Springs Reflecting the Moon*, and so on. In addition, during this period, non-titled genres such as preludes, fantasies, and sonatas began to appear, which meant that Chinese piano music was no longer limited to the expression of thematic musical intent, and began to express national themes and musical styles through non-titled music.

After the reform and opening up, Chinese piano music has shown a diversified development trend, with innovations in music themes, performance techniques, harmony effects, rhythm texture,

and other aspects. For example, many composers have integrated national modes into traditional harmony, forming a semitone, non third harmonic overlay, and creating piano works with Chinese techniques and verve. The piano works of this period can be divided into three categories, namely, piano adaptations, piano works with national colors, and experimental piano works. Piano adaptations mainly include Wang Jianzhong's *Late Singing of Fishing Songs* and *Entering the New Era*, Li Yinghai's *Yangguan Sandai*, and Wang Lisan's *Memories of the Errenzhuan*. Piano works with national characteristics include Quan Jihao's *Combination of Length and Length*, Sun Yiqiang's *Spring Dance*, Liu Dunnan's piano concerto *Mountain Forest*, and Wang Lisan's *Heaven Quest*. Experimental piano works include "Tai Chi" by Zhao Xiaosheng.

### **3. Expressive Techniques of National Style in the Performance of Chinese Piano Works**

#### **3.1. National Style Reflected in the Choice of Creative Themes**

The so-called creative theme mainly refers to the organizational structure and emotional background of a piano work set during its creation. Specifically, the creation of piano music works includes lyrical style, narrative style, capriccio style, variation style, and so on. From the perspective of the integration of national style and piano works, the main form of reference for piano music creation with national characteristics in China is to combine the performance effects of different national instruments and corresponding styles and themes with the creation of piano music works. It refers to a musical work that is performed using ethnic instruments in the selection of original playing instruments, and through re creation, it is presented in the form of piano music. The representative works are *Three six* and *Autumn moon over the Pinghu Lake*. Among them, in the early stage of music creation, the former was mainly composed of Jiangnan silk and bamboo instruments, and the music style also tended to be soft and melodious. *Autumn Moon on Pinghu Lake* is a typical piece of music played using the erhu, a national instrument. This transformation of primitive musical instrument types and musical forms into piano music to achieve the re presentation of the work is a reflection of the national characteristics and style of piano music works from the perspective of themes.

#### **3.2. The National Style Reflected in the Structural Form of Music**

It is mainly a way of expressing national style from the perspective of specific organizational forms of music. To understand the structural form of piano music, one should first analyze it from the perspective of the structural form of the musical work itself. From the perspective of overall structure, the structure of a musical work includes two forms: internal structure and external structure. The external structure mainly refers to the different forms expressed in the plot, form, musical performance effects, and performance process, while the internal structure mainly refers to the structural characteristics reflected in the creative thinking of the music, the organizational form of the music score, and the psychological and emotional characteristics reflected in the music. Based on the analysis of the structural and formal characteristics of Chinese and Western music works, it can be seen that the music structure referred to in the West mainly focuses on the formal organizational structure when composing music. Typical structural forms include two-part form, trilogy form, convoluted form, and sonata form. The typical Chinese style of musical form emphasizes the continuation and expression of the four steps of starting and ending in different movements. The so-called piano music works with national style mainly use the form of Western musical instruments as the main body for reference in the creation of national style. In the expression form and expressive force of stage movements, the starting and ending forms of our national style are matched with different movements to achieve an effect of combining Chinese and Western styles in the plot and structural form of the overall music structure. A typical representative piece of music is the large-scale piano musical work *Yellow River*. In the entire movement, the *Defending the Yellow River* in the *Yellow River Chorus* is a classic passage that is still widely sung today.

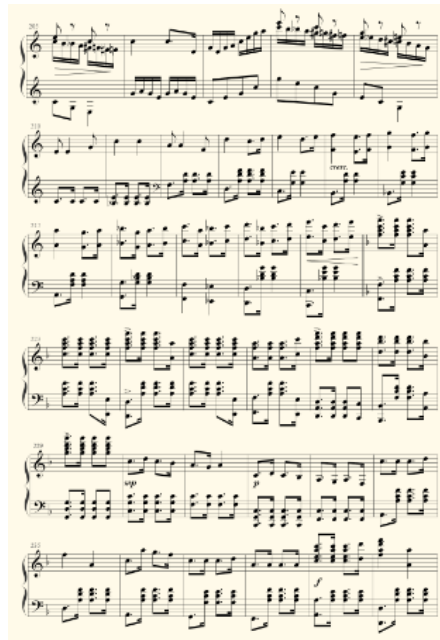


Figure 1 Piano score for *Defending the Yellow River*.

### 3.3. National Style Reflected in Language

The language expression of musical works has typical characteristics in the nature of musical works. As an expression tool, the role of language in musical works cannot be ignored. For musical works, there are significant differences in the musical language expressions required for different types of works, work presentation forms, and work styles. From the perspective of the national style dimension of piano works, it mainly reflects the national style through the following aspects.

Firstly, in the national style contained in the melody. From the perspective of performance, the expression of national style in melody is directly related to the artistic characteristics of piano performance. Melody is a basic language for presenting the content and style of a musical work. The national characteristics and style of the main melody actually represent the style and form of the entire work. From the perspective of the constituent elements of melody, it can be seen that the content of melody includes the high and low pitch, the long and short duration, the fast and slow rhythm, and the coordinated organization of elements such as mode and tonality, forming a comprehensive musical expression, namely melody. In the organization of the national style of melody, it is mainly a style form formed by drawing on the regional elements of national music. According to the melody characteristics of national music in different regions, it is integrated into piano works as the main melody to reflect the corresponding national style. A typical representative piano work is *Liuyang River*. The creation of this work is based on the creation of folk songs in Hunan Province. In the melody at the beginning of the entire piece, the original national style theme is maintained, and a strong artistic conception and characteristics with national characteristics are expressed. From the perspective of the audience, it can be directly brought into a national music appreciation environment with strong ethnic characteristics in this way, which is a typical representative of the national style of piano music embodied through melody.

Secondly, the national style embodied in the rhythm. Rhythm is the main basis for presenting the overall style of a musical work. Through the application of different rhythm types, the style of music works also presents different forms of expression, and different rhythm forms can also achieve the cutting emotional expression of different segments of the same national style music, especially suitable for multi movement piano music works. In terms of the form of music structure, the rhythm forms of national style music vary according to different regions and ethnic groups. For example, in Huagu Opera in Anhui Province, “Dong Dong Qiang” is the main rhythmic feature and form, while the piano music work *Huagu* retains this typical rhythmic form in the organization and creation of piano music works, which is actually a continuation and reservation of the creation from the rhythmic dimension to reflect the ethnic style. In addition to the above two forms of national

style expression, the national style expression in piano music works is also reflected through the art of harmony and expression techniques.

Thirdly, the national style embodied in emotional expression. Emotional expression is not only the purpose of organizing and forming musical works, but also an important aspect that reflects their artistic value and expressiveness. For national style piano music works, the so-called emotional national style is actually a specific requirement for the performer's artistic expression and emotional appeal. In simple terms, it requires the performer to pay attention to combining the emotional expression forms of the work being played, truly integrate personal emotions into the work, and timely integrate a portion of personal emotions as the plot of the work fluctuates, forming a national emotional expression and resonance with the performer's appeal. This requirement is a higher requirement based on the spiritual and emotional levels compared to the former.

#### **4. Conclusion**

When performing Chinese piano works, it is necessary to fully integrate national culture into piano performance, further highlight the inherent characteristics of Chinese piano works, further display the national piano performance style, and enhance the artistic expression of the performance of Chinese piano music works. In addition, it is also necessary to conduct research on the style of Chinese national music based on the development of society, promote the creation of Chinese piano works, and better inherit and promote Chinese music culture in Chinese piano music.

#### **References**

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