

Analysis on the Application and Performance of “Symphonic” Thinking of Double Piano

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Abstract: “Symphonic” playing thinking is integrated into the performance of double piano works, which is a deep exploration of the double piano playing method at the aesthetic level. Taking Tchaikovsky's double piano work Flower Dance as an example, this thesis explores the symphonic thinking characteristics of the double piano works in three aspects: explores the timbre attributes by excavating the range characteristics of the voice, clarifies the communication and dialogue among the musical instruments, and controls the changes in the level of dynamics. The thesis also suggests that adding innovative playing methods and various timbre changes in the performance and simulating the performance of different instruments in the band will enhance the artistic appeal of the works.

1. Introduction

In the vast literature of piano music, double piano is a cooperative art, and the players interpret the artistic connotation of the works through tacit cooperation. John Browning says: “You have to understand the importance of thinking in an orchestral way on a piano keyboard. A good pianist plays not just a piece of music, but a piece of music like a woodwind, stringed or wind instrument, which gives the music its own color world.”^[1] The double piano is an important expression of the piano duet. It is an art that requires the player's high acquaintance. Two pianos sometimes rise and fall and sometimes echo each other, making the music instantly three-dimensional and pluralistic.

The use of symphonic thinking in the performance of double piano music not only strengthens the sense of hierarchy of the voice of the double piano, so that each sound of each voice has a sense of existence, but also forms the lines of the voice into a variety of colors. “Symphonic” thinking is a more advanced thinking mode used by composers in their creations. This is a more open thinking mode. With the development of the times and changes in aesthetic tastes, the mode of “symphonic” thinking has gradually matured and becomes the basic creative thought in the classical and romantic era. The author consulted a large amount of literature, combined with the orchestral score for summary, and analyzed the “symphonic” acoustic effect of the double piano version Flower Dance. On one hand, the author deeply analyzed the instrument sound simulated by each melodic material in the double piano version to fully clarify the composer's creative intention; on the other hand, pre-design the way of performing the work, so that the performer understands and interprets the work with a symphonic thinking, bringing a rational path for the second-stage creation in performance. The following part will take Tchaikovsky's double piano work The Nutcracker group excerpt Flower Dance as an example, to explore how to use “symphonic” thinking in the performance of the double piano.

2. Double Piano Work Flower Dance

2.1 The Background of Double Piano Work Flower Dance

Tchaikovsky devoted his life to the music of dance drama. He once said: “Dance drama is also symphony. Only in music with symphonic structure, there can be the basis for the plot of dance drama --the real theatrical structure.”^[2] During 1887-1893, this period was the late and peak period

of Tchaikovsky's creation. He wrote three famous dance dramas, Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty and The Nutcracker. These three works promote the development and innovation of dance drama music, which use the band's rich expressiveness to enrich the character personality in the dance, and make the dance full of charm.

The Nutcracker suite, written by Tchaikovsky in 1892, was based on a fairy tale written by Huffman based on the French translation of Alexander Dumas. The waltz Flower Dance appeared in the climax of the dance drama, showing a luxurious and jubilant festive scene. In this dance drama, the prince Nutcracker takes Clara on his way to the kingdom of fairyland and sees the scene of "snowflakes dancing", and the prince dances with Clara. The creation of the whole dance is permeated with the noble and elegant temperament of the composer, and the Russian-style lyricism is surrounded by a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. This work is full of fantastic colors and full of childishness. It is often performed by the famous ballet at Christmas, and it is also known as the "Christmas Ballet" which is enduring.

2.2 The Timbre Attributes of Simulating Instruments in the Creation of Flower Dance

This work has a solo version and a double piano version. The double piano confrontation has a wide range of sound and a huge momentum. Diversified acoustic changes and three-dimensional acoustic space create a performance like a symphony band, giving the work a strong appeal. The piano itself is a "single timbre" instrument. Although the performance form of the double piano can make the piano "symphonic", the high consistency of the timbre also brings certain difficulties to the interpretation of the double piano works, which requires the players to adjust and change the touch key, contrast, intonation and sound ratio to express the timbre attributes of different instruments.

In the whole melody, the whole song expresses the timbre attributes of simulating the clarinet, oboe, horn, trumpet, trombone, piccolo, violin, harp and other instruments. The players should firstly make a systematic analysis of the total score of the works, listen to the performance of the symphony orchestra, and be familiar with the timbre attributes of different musical instruments. They need to take the sound effect of the band as the basis and combine the total score of orchestral music to give full play to their own imagination of the concept of sound, and show the rich music color like symphony as much as possible while playing.

2.3 Analysis of the Core Materials of the Double Piano Work Flower Dance

The core material of the work refers to the important motive and material when the composer creates a work. It runs through the main line of the work and the development of music content is based on this main line. The core material is like the trunk of a large tree, giving roots and nutrients to the branches and leaves. The core material of this work is revealed from the beginning of the introduction of the music: The opening theme of the orchestral score is played by the oboe and clarinet, opening the full-length chapter on the genus chord in D major, and the three melodic levels of the first subsection are the V, VII, II levels of D major. (See figure 1)

Figure 1 Orchestral Score

The core material is the main energy of the whole song. After the introduction, the core music with typical characteristics plays the theme again. The tone of the core material has also changed. The first three melody intervals are still superimposed three times, appearing on the major chord in a minor. The core material that appears many times in the whole song is the basis for the presentation and development of the whole song, and each appearance pushes the music to a climax through continuous dynamic changes, texture changes, and development of the synthesis. This

creative technique is also called “thematic repetition”, which makes the theme of the music fresh and symphonic, and gradually reveals the profound meaning of the work.

3. The “Symphonic” Thinking Characteristics of Double Piano Work Flower Dance

Tchaikovsky is good at expressing sweet and slightly melancholic melody with the genre of “Waltz”. The pure and gorgeous orchestration and diverse polyphonic methods give listeners a harmonious and elegant form of beauty. From the perspective of “symphonic” thinking, the author captures the characteristics of “symphonic” thinking in this work from a macro perspective.

3.1 Explores the Timbre Attributes by Excavating the Range Characteristics of the Voice

The prelude to the beginning of the music is section (1-33). The arpeggios in the passages are filled with the entire piano's range, imitating the fast and clear timbre characteristics of the harp. From the 34th bar to the presentation section (34-141), the theme here is played with a French trumpet timbre. The noble and elegant timbre of the French trumpet lays the solemn and luxurious festival atmosphere of the whole song, and then the rotating waltz begins. The first part is the presentation part, and it is divided into two small sections. In the first section (34-69), the theme of “a” in the presentation section appears for the first time in the whole song. The core material of continuous upward movement and the strong, weak and weak of the three beats of the waltz awaken the harp in contemplation, and all the enthusiasm melts in the melody of joy. The second section (70-141) has more changes in the layers of sound color, mainly imitating the timbres of string and wind. Especially when playing the double notes of bar 70, it imitates the effect of string unison. The strings have a good blend of timbres, and the major melody is filled with youthful joy. In the second segment, the five-segment sound of bar 74 also mimics the timbre of the flute in orchestral music. The flute's sound characteristics are gentle, delicate, low volume and dynamic. Starting from the (158-189) section of the music, the first piano mimics the plucked melody of the violin, and the second piano completes the melody by a combination of horn + clarinet + oboe instruments. In the rhythmic background of the three-beat string, the subtle, steady, singing monologue of the woodwind instruments slowly comes. Tchaikovsky often uses musical instruments to mix and stack to produce a representative “mixed timbre”, which makes the acoustic effect thick and uniform, and increases the clarity of the melody.

Figure 2 Double Piano Work Flower Dance

3.2 Clarify the Communication and Dialogue between Musical Instruments, and Pay Attention to the Expression of the Connotation of the Phrase

The deepest passage in the music appears in the middle section of the music (142-157). The melody on the upper left hand side of the first piano mimics the coherent timbre of the cello, and the graceful lyrical melody is the most vivid expression of Tchaikovsky's waltz style. The right-hand melody of the second piano and the right-hand melody of the first piano respectively imitate the

first violin and the second violin in the band. The light performance of the strings makes the tunes wider and more charming. The dialogue and echo of the two violins make temperament of the music soothing and long. The cooperation of the two pianos in this paragraph must be invincible. The players should pay attention to the connection of the phrases and control the speed of the passages, and the fascinating melody will continuously flow out. (See figure 2)

3.3. Controls the Changes in the Level of Dynamics and Enhance the Three-Dimensional Feeling of the Work

The ending part starts from bar 288. This is the last appearance of the theme a. A large number of brass instruments are used to symbolize the arrival of light and victory. The mood is stronger than ever, and the texture of the music is continuously thickened to form the climax of the whole song. The second piano also uses a large number of chords to express the effect of the band's unison, and the theme of the harmony is richer, showing a lively and festive atmosphere. The entire section should pay attention to the handle of the dynamics. The increasing amplitude is from mf-fff. The player should not control too much dynamics when the mf appears in the section and don't release the power too early in the place marked with more dynamics. The player must follow the progressive direction of the interval to make the music horizontally rhythmic and dynamic. The player also needs to keep the intensity of fff at the last moment and then explode, so that the work is close to the full acoustic effect of "symphonic".

4. Treatment of Symphonic Thinking Principles in Performance

4.1 Simulation of Instrument Timbres

In the double piano work Flower Dance, the acoustic effects of different instruments should be simulated imaginatively while playing. The timbre of the harp at the introduction of the music needs to be fluent and smooth when the player plays it. The player grasps the arpeggio's head and plays the luster flow of the harp. When the core theme of the passage is played, the unique and coherent timbre of the woodwind instrument should be expressed. While playing, the player can use the touch of his fingers to play a warm timbre effect as far as possible. The end of the section is to imitate the performance of the entire symphony band. In the process of touching the keys, the player can use the driving force of the waist of the body, use the force of the natural sinking of the arms, focus the power on the fingers, and play full and brilliant acoustic effects.

4.2 Control of the Layered Sense of the Voice

When playing the double piano, the player must be clear about the tasks they perform in the voice. When there are many voices and the voices alternate frequently, the dynamics level of the voices must be designed to enhance the three-dimensional sense of the work. For example, in section (158-189) of the double-piano sheet music (See figure 3), the first piano imitates the short phrase of the violin with a two-ply consonant. When playing, the player should try to "carry", "raise", and control the volume to form a timbre layer of string music with a weak and delicate voice, highlighting the main melody of the second piano played by horn + clarinet + oboe. The player should imagine that the wind instrument player emits the warm and rich voice by pressing the keys and holes on the instrument with his fingers.^[3] When the piano plays a section that mimics the timbre of a wind instrument, the player needs to quickly press the keys with fingertips to make the voice of the keys full of metal texture. The core of "symphonic" thinking is the "hierarchical division" of the timbres of the voices. By analyzing the characteristics of the sounds of each voice, it is clear that each voice is an equal ensemble, a primary-secondary relationship, or a relationship between imitation and competition. The sound ratio of the acoustics should be adjusted continuously to enhance the three-dimensional feel of the work.

Figure 3 Double Piano Work Flower Dance

4.3. Control of Pedals

In the performance of the double piano works, to present the perfect cooperation, the pedal in the use of length and depth is more rigorous than the solo. The use of the pedal in the whole song must be combined with the dynamics of the touch, the change of harmony, the direction of the phrase, the style of the music, the mood of the music, and the way of the pedal change of the two sides to achieve the overall acoustic effect. The pedals are broadly divided into three categories:

(1) Melody pedal: The whole song appears multiple lines representing independent parts of the melody. For example, the section (275-278) imitates the violin timbre. In order to keep the melody voice clear, according to the three beat strong and weak rules, the player will press the pedal in the first beat and release the pedal in the latter two beats.

(2) Modified pedal: Modified pedals have different depth requirements. Some sections use pedals with 1/2 or 1/4 depth. This modified pedal is mainly used to change the pedal according to the different timbres of the imitating instruments, and the pedal is changed according to the Articulation of the musical notation. (See figure 4) The change of the melody in this section is a paragraph that imitates the violin plucking. The mood of the section is lively and the notes are denser. The player changes the pedals quickly according to the articulation and changes of the short phrases, and presses down only 1/4 of the pedals.

Figure 4 Double Piano Work Flower Dance

(3) Harmony Pedal: At the Beginning of the Final Paragraph Section 288, the Tension of Harmony is Increasing. the Music Has a Gradually Increasing Sense of Dynamics, and the Chord At the End is Band Unison with a Sense of End. Thus, the Player Needs According to the Dynamic Transformation of Each Beat of Harmony to Step on the Pedal.

4.4 Control of the Overall Structure

The player of the double piano must not only handle the local details of the music delicately, but

also control the overall structure of the music. Because there is a certain degree of difference in the performance levels of the two sides, the overall layout of the music is designed by using “symphonic” thinking. They should pay attention to controlling the increase and decrease of the dynamics, the breathing of the phrase, and the connection of the paragraphs. (1) The conversion of the harmony color of the paragraph and the tonal color of the overall structure. (2) Changes in mood, speed, and dynamics at different levels of a paragraph. (3) The conversion of the local small climax paragraphs and the big climax paragraphs of the whole song. ^[4] (4) Pauses, breaths, and foreshadows before the beginning of the passage. The two performers should have clear performance ideas and good mental control. The player who plays the accompaniment part must not only maintain the stable rhythm of the part, but also cooperate with the melody part to express the trend of the phrase, so that the performance is full of paragraph and overall sense and the “double piano” moves forward in the music together.

5. Conclusion

Integrating symphonic thinking into the playing of the double piano will make the author feel fresh, and the symphonic nature of the theme will give the music a deeper meaning. From the perspective of symphonic acoustic thinking, to play the double piano work Flower Dance, the player should pay attention to the cooperation of both sides, analyze the “symphonic” of the work, explore the timbre attributes of the vocal range, clarify the communication and dialogue between musical instruments, pay attention to the expression of the connotation of the phrase, control the change of the level of dynamics, and enhance the three-dimensional sense of the work. To integrate symphonic thinking into the performance of double piano works is to try more listening and adjustment in cooperation, to explore the deep level of aesthetic level of double piano performance. Adding innovative playing methods and various timbre changes to the performance can simulate the effect of different musical instruments in the band. The player should make the timbre of the work diversified, clarify the layer of the music, and add more tacit cooperation to enhance the artistic appeal of the work by correct and appropriate means on the basis of following the original work.

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