

A Study on the Regional Cultural Characteristics of Piano Works

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Abstract: Culture is the vitality and important spiritual force of a nation. People in many places often showcase the development history and economic situation of their region through regional culture, and many piano music works also combine regional culture to sublimate emotions. This article first explores the influence of regional culture on music culture from two perspectives: music genres and music styles. Then, it explores the regional cultural characteristics in modern piano music works from the perspectives of regional dialects, music, and opera.

1. Introduction

Music creation is a process of spiritual activity, and it is undeniable that anyone's music creation is influenced by specific geographical environments. Therefore, some modern piano works also have prominent regional cultural characteristics. Scholars in China have pointed out that as a Western instrument, piano music in China has not only absorbed foreign music culture but also incorporated elements of its own ethnic group in the development process. It is a product of the combination of Chinese and Western music, with significant differences in form and tonality compared to Western piano works. Based on this, this article explores the regional cultural characteristics in domestic piano works from a regional perspective.

2. The influence of regional culture on music culture

2.1 Impact on music style

Piano and other music cultures are important channels for expressing people's emotions, and the regional and temporal characteristics of the geographical environment can directly or indirectly affect different music cultures. Taking Xinjiang as an example, as a region with multi-ethnic settlements, Xinjiang is located within the Eurasian continent and is a necessary area for the Silk Road, as well as an important area for the intersection of economy and culture between the East and the West. Since ancient times, Xinjiang has been influenced by cultural systems such as Central Plains culture, Persian culture, and Islamic culture, ultimately forming a unique regional culture, such as the unique Xinjiang dance music, which also provides a large amount of materials for the creation of piano works in China, as shown in Table 1[1-2].

Table 1 Chinese Piano Works Incorporating Xinjiang Music Culture Elements into Modern and Contemporary Times

| Creator | Creation time | Piano Works |
|--------------|---------------|--|
| Xian Xinghai | 1941 | "Three Kazakh Dance Songs" |
| Sangtong | 1947 | In That Distant Place |
| Ding Shande | 1950 | "The First Xinjiang Dance Music" |
| Guo Zhihong | 1958 | "Xinjiang Dance Music" and "Orton River" |
| Sun Yiqiang | 1980 | Spring Dance |
| Li Binyang | 1985 | Avanti Suite |
| Zhou Xinhua | 2009 | "Xinjiang Style Piano Music" |

From the perspective of music style, Xinjiang is mainly influenced by the Chinese music system, Arab music system, and European music system. The characteristics of these three major music

systems are shown in Table 2. Usually, regional folk songs can reflect the characteristics of regional culture and the common music style of the region. As a multi-ethnic gathering area, Xinjiang is most representative of the Uyghur, Han, and Kazakh ethnic groups, and its music style is also influenced by the above-mentioned ethnic music styles. Taking the Uyghur music style as an example, the Uyghur people mostly live near the Kashi oasis in the Tarim Basin and the southern Tianshan Mountains, and the industry is dominated by oasis agriculture. Therefore, the oasis culture has a great impact on the Uyghur people's life and music style, and finally forms the unique music culture of the nation, represented by the singing music "Dastan", "Qiuci Music", and "Gaochang Music", There are also popular folk songs of various contents and forms, such as "Lift Your Head" and "Send Me a Rose". These music works have rich types of modes, prominent stress, and common syncopation rhythms and weak sections[3].

Table 2 Main characteristics of the three major music systems

| | The Mongolian system | European system | Iranian system |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Music structure | Music with a cavity | Music without cavity | Partial cavity |
| Music organization | Mainly consisting of three notes and four groups, emphasizing the pentatonic nature of tones | Mainly consisting of four tone sequences | Mainly consisting of four tone sequences |
| Rhythm and beat | Scattered board and non rhythmic board | Rhythmic board | Scattered board, mixed rhythm |

2.2 Impact on music genres

The terrain platform in the eastern region of China, especially in the southern region, is mainly dominated by paddy fields. The songs and vocals composed by people during the process of working in the fields are soothing, long, and tactful, with a focus on "village and field music" dance performances. For example, the representative song of Guangdong music, "Rain Beats Banana", uses light and lively music to express people's joy, and the rhythm and short sentence length make the entire piece of music. The sound of rain hitting the banana trees is highly characteristic of the local area. The climate in the north is dry, while the western region is mainly mountainous and plateau. Due to inconvenient transportation for a long time in the past, "mountain songs" are mainly used to express emotions. For example, the folk song "Xin Tian You" in northern Shaanxi contains the spiritual outlook and personality of mountain people, with strong local characteristics. When it comes to Inner Mongolia grasslands, one naturally thinks of herdsmen riding horses on the grasslands, the boundless grasslands and soaring eagles in the blue sky, which can be seen in "Grassland Love Song"[4-5].

3. Regional cultural characteristics in piano works

3.1 Regional Dialects

The relationship between music and language has attracted the attention of scholars both domestically and internationally in recent years. From the perspective of the development of music culture in China, the musical works of folk songs in many places are deeply influenced by dialect phonetics and tones. The creation of many piano works in China is also the author's reapplication of folk song materials, and naturally, they are also influenced by regional dialect phonetics and tones. In the process of the development of Chinese piano music, many authors have incorporated various interesting regional dialects into the creative process, which has greatly enriched the culture of piano music and also made many domestic piano works have more diverse melodic features.

For example, "Blue Flower" is a folk song from northern Shaanxi, which mainly tells the tragic love story of a beautiful girl. It consists of two contrasting phrases and has eight lyrics. Composer

Wang Lisan's piano piece "Blue Flower" in 1951 quoted the melody of this folk song. Based on this, the melody form starting from the major second interval in the first and second bars was modified to a pure fourth interval melody form. This creation makes the overall melody of the piano work more undulating and vivid, and the first paragraph of the lyrics pronounced in dialect in the piano work has diverse slip states in the sentences due to the tone. From the perspective of regional dialects, the pronunciation of the "blue" character in dialects is closer to the pure fourth interval at the beginning of the second section, making it more easily accepted by the audience. At the same time, the upward sliding of a single "two tone" syllable and the downward sliding of a single "four tone" tone in Shaanxi dialect also conform to the pure fourth interval distance. The pitch distance of the fourth interval in piano works is very consistent with the phonetic sliding changes of Shaanxi dialect. The piano piece "Blue Flower" integrates rich Shaanxi dialect elements and has regional cultural characteristics. In addition, the piano piece "Xi Feng Nian" presents concise and concise features, vividly showcasing the festive scenes of traditional festivals in rural Northeast China, and also incorporating many Northeast dialects to enhance the overall musical effect[6-7].

3.2 Regional Music

Hell music is a microcosm of excellent traditional Chinese culture, deeply loved by local people. The overall musical structure and distinctive musical equipment allow listeners to feel the regional cultural characteristics contained in it while listening. Taking Xinjiang's music and culture as an example, its unique geographical location has also made it a center for cultural, artistic, and economic exchanges among various countries. Minority ethnic groups such as the Uyghur have absorbed the monolingual civilizations of Persia, ancient Rome, and ancient Greece, and their own music and culture have further developed. Through multiple ethnic integrations, the music and culture of ethnic groups such as the Uyghur in Xinjiang have become inclusive, Xinjiang music culture has elements of folk music from multiple ethnic groups, so many Xinjiang music works have alternating beats, and there are fewer instances of a single beat being consistent throughout.

The multi-ethnic settlement and inclusive music culture in Xinjiang also make it easy for domestic composers to be influenced in the process of creating piano works. For example, Mr. Sun Yiqiang's piano piece "Spring Dance" is derived from the hand drum dance of Xinjiang Uyghur people, which is commonly seen in ritual activities. Women are dancers, while men use hand drums to play. The piano piece "Spring Dance" draws inspiration from the segmented rhythm and musical rhythm of hand drums, and the prominent rhythmic stress fully reflects the free and rapid rotation of Xinjiang ethnic dance movements. The introduction of "Spring Dance" in D major establishes the light and bright style of the entire piece, highlighting the passionate and unrestrained style of Xinjiang hand drums in melody. The music also imitates traditional ethnic instruments such as Dongbula in many places[8].

The regional environment of Xinjiang also determines that the melody of Xinjiang music is deeply influenced by multiple regions and ethnic cultures, with parabolic, top truth, and opening melody being the most common. Among them, the parabolic shape refers to the melody that proceeds from low to high to the highest point, then descends back to the pronounced melody; The top true type refers to the homophones between the final sound of a musical phrase and the initial sound of a second musical phrase; The opening type refers to the application of the first two notes of the melody at the beginning of a piece of music in a fifth degree upward movement. The piano piece "Spring Dance" created by Mr. Sun Yiqiang has obvious parabolic and opening melodies, especially the use of the continuous upward movement of the fifth degree in the left hand to form a segmented rhythm. The opening melody makes the entire piano piece more jumping and imitates the classic hand drum style of Xinjiang more effectively[9].

3.3 Regional Opera

China's traditional Chinese opera culture has a long history and diverse styles. Regional traditional Chinese opera cultures have borrowed from each other in the process of development, forming a unique local style of traditional Chinese opera. Many piano pieces in our country are adapted from folk songs or traditional Chinese opera melodies, and even imitate traditional Chinese

opera music elements through piano touch and performance techniques during the piano composition process. For example, composer Zhang Chao used the board structure of Peking Opera to create the piano piece "Pi Huang", Jiang Wen used the two yellow tones of Peking Opera to create the piano piece "Hu Qin in the Afternoon", and Chu Wanghua used the rocking board form of Peking Opera's "tight pull and slow singing" to create the piano piece "In That Distant Place". Among them, "In That Distant Place" incorporates elements of traditional Chinese opera to slow down the melody of the entire piece. The melody is long, and the audience naturally produces a continuous sense of rhythm during the listening process. The entire piano piece presents a three-dimensional feature, as well as a richer dynamic level. The soothing theme melody of the right hand soprano is significantly contrasted with the fast and rapid accompaniment of the left hand, and the fast and tight characteristics of the accompaniment instruments in traditional Chinese opera are imitated through the half jump performance of finger pressing keys and the fast promotion and separation performance techniques[10].

4. Conclusion

China is a multi-ethnic country, and many ethnic groups have integrated singing and dancing into their daily lives. At the same time, the regional environment of different regions also determines the local music, language, and cultural characteristics. Piano music has a strong expressive power, and Chinese composers are easily influenced by regional culture in the process of creating piano music. High quality piano works that integrate regional cultural elements are also increasingly appearing in front of people and being loved by more and more people.

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