

Exploring the classical and romantic elements in Schubert's piano works

—Take the first movement of Schubert's Piano Sonata in A major D664 as an example

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Abstract: Due to the influence of the times and environment, Schubert's piano sonatas embody the changes of the late classical period and the freedom of the early romanticism, and this lyrical and casual free style laid the cornerstone for the development of romantic music performance. This paper takes Schubert's Piano in A major D664 as an example, and analyzes the classical and romantic elements in Schubert's piano sonatas by examining the background of Schubert's time and composition, as well as the structure of the piece, harmonic weaving, melodic themes, and tonal modality. In this way, the musical style of Schubert's works will be examined more clearly.

1. Overview of the intergenerational background of schubert's piano compositions

At the end of the eighteenth century, the outbreak of the French bourgeois revolution caused people to pursue the ideas of freedom and fraternity at that time, with more emphasis on the output and expression of personal emotions, and artistic creation entered a new period of free play. Composers continued the rigorous requirements of the classical music style while pursuing a new path of the most basic human emotional appeals. Romantic music was like a bridge between the traditional classical and modern freedom of musical expression. Classicalism and Romanticism coexist in the same space and time, with sharp edges and freedom. Franz Schubert (1797-1828) emerged from this era when the classical and the romantic collided. In the context of the intergenerational era, Schubert's compositions were deeply influenced by Beethoven, and he constantly sought breakthroughs on the basis of the classical style, thus gradually forming his own unique style. His works not only reflect the dignified and elegant side of the Viennese soul, but also have the flirtation and poetry of Romanticism.

Sonata in A major, D664 was composed in 1819. This work is a symbol of Schubert's musical exploration period towards maturity. This was the period of French history when the Bourbon dynasty was restored. The feudal aristocracy, represented by the king's power, had long since been wounded by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic regime. All freedom-loving, progressive and revolutionary ideas were severely destroyed, and there was nowhere to express the suppression of human nature. As a result, the individualism of many artists was greatly enhanced, and they began to look at the relationship between society and the individual in a new light, and also began to emphasize the predominance of personal emotions and highlight their individuality, a sentiment that transcended the balance and rationality pursued during the Classical period. Against this historical background, Schubert opened up a new path for the piano sonata that was different from that of his predecessors, and also laid down new ideas for the later Romantic style. This paper takes Schubert's Piano Sonata in A major D664 as an example to further explore the classical and romantic elements in Schubert's musical works.

2. Exploration of the classical elements in Schubert's piano sonatas

2.1. The regular layout of the structure of the piece

Since Schubert appeared in the background of the era of alternating classical and romantic, his

works must also reflect part of the epitome of the musical style of the classical period, such as: the musical style tends to be neat and symmetrical square phrase structure, the paragraph or movement termination is very clear, and the contrast between the themes in the movement changes more obviously.

D664 is still a typical classical sonata structure, i.e., presentation - development - recapitulation - coda (Figure 1). In the classical period, the presentation section generally establishes a unified relationship of opposites, the tonality is in a dominant relationship, and the musical themes are in sharp contrast. This work of Schubert strictly uses the classical symmetry of the dominant-genus relationship, and the tonal layout of the presentation part starts with the dominant, with the genus as the connection between the dominant and the sub-part, and the main tonality of the sub-part is still dominated by the dominant and the genus, and finally the coda returns to the dominant key of A major, and the harmonies use the stable progression of dominant-genus-major to strengthen the stability of the music of the presentation part and the subjectivity of the tonality[1].

<p style="text-align: center;">Schubert 1819 Sonata in A major D.664</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Allegro in medium tempo Presentation (bars 1-47) Theme in A major (1-19) -Concert section in E major 20 -Subpart A-e-E (21-39) -Concluding section in E major (40-42) -Coda in A major (43-47) Expanding part (48-79 bars) Main theme spread #f-E-#c (48-57) - Connecting part E (58-65) - Sub theme spread #c (66-79) (59 bars in total) Reproduction section (77-126 bars) Reproduction of the main theme in A major (77-98) - Reproduction of the secondary theme in e minor (99) - Connecting part in A major (100-120) - Closing part in A major (120- (126) Coda (127-133 bars) (7 bars in total)</p>
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Figure 1 Schubert D664 Composition Structure

As is well known, the K46-genus-main is a very typical termination of the Classical period and is usually used when one theme ends and another begins. Schubert inherits this regular classical termination in its entirety in this work, and in the 18th bar of the work (Figure 2) the main theme is perfectly terminated in the main A major square.



Figure 2 Schubert D664 score examples (15-23)

In the process of the conclusion of the secondary theme of the work (Figure 3)(Figure 4), a large number of positive termination is also used, as if the story is coming to an end, but there is still a lot of heartfelt feelings, full of reluctance, so it is repeatedly pulled in the non-stop termination, and this kind of termination also foreshadows the colorful story of the unfolding section.

The work still adopts this kind of termination (Figure 5), that is, two column chords are used to



Figure 6 Schubert D664 score examples (20-27)



Figure 7 Schubert D664 score examples (58-67)

Due to the influence of the bourgeois "Enlightenment" and the French Revolution, as well as the criticism and exposure of religious superstition, classical artists advocated "humanism", respected rationality, and paid attention to emotional restraint and harmonious balance [3]. Influenced by the times, the music of the classical period was often characterized by a regular structural layout, clear harmonic weaving, strict termination, and clear changes in intensity, which gave a clear symmetry to the melody and rhythm of the piece. This work continues the elegant and refined aristocratic courtly style of the classical period in its composition and weave language, fully reflecting the balanced and stable characteristics of the classical music style.

3. Schubert piano sonata romanticism style exploration

3.1. Singing expression of melody and weaving

The singing expression of Schubert's works is pervasive, whether it is the use of accompaniment weaving or the melody of the theme is extremely romantic expression of singing. (Figure 8) The theme begins with a weakly rising rhythm, allowing the music to unfold from a soothing mood, with a sense of storytelling that drives the melodic flow of the theme. The melody in the upper part has a big wave melodic line, mainly in the form of progressions and small jumps, with occasional big jumps. The smooth melodic progression and the accompanying rhythm combine to make the music gentle and heartfelt, easily resonating with the listener, as if it were an art song telling a story.

The low part of the accompaniment provides a very important harmonic effect for the singing of the work, using a strong full decomposition chord, which itself is very lyrical and at the same time blends well with the main theme, without stealing the limelight[4]. This warm, poetic and lyrical approach expands the harmonic and melodic expressiveness of the sonata, with a distinctly Romantic tendency. At the same time, the main theme and the secondary theme are not contradictory and conflicting, as in the classical period, but rather they blend and interpenetrate each other, with the strong dominant tone of the Romantic period.

Opus posth. 120 · D 664

Allegro moderato

Figure 8 Schubert D664 score examples (1-9)

3.2. The freedom to change the tonality of the tune

In the classical period, composers composed according to the strict and regular S-D-T harmonic function, and did not allow reversal. The accompaniment weave mostly revolved around the main key or the genus, and the contrast between the main and genus was very strong. In the Romantic period, composers were much freer in the way they transposed and even began to break away from the traditional harmonic progressions[5].

In the 31st measure of this movement, Schubert boldly uses the D-S harmonic accidental progression (Figure 9), where the genus chord is not followed by a return to the dominant chord, but by an off-key fourth chord, which then moves directly to a fourth 6th chord. This type of progression was almost forbidden in the Classical period, but through the bold innovations of Schubert and subsequent composers, this harmonic progression was rationalized and made the musical style of the Romantic period more liberal.

Figure 9 Schubert D664 score examples (28-31)

In many works of the classical period, the tonicity and tonality must be regular and well-proportioned to each other. With this harmonic progression, the composer's premise of expressing feelings must also be firmly fixed within the framework of harmonic functionality, which has certain limitations. The Schubert sonatas, however, are more spontaneous in their compositional technique, with the expression of inner emotions outweighing the rigor of the compositional approach. The main theme of the Schubert sonata is developed in six short bars in four keys: #f-E-#c-D. This free and daring use of tonality represents the desire for freedom and the courage of the composers of the Romantic period to break through the constraints and seek their own expression. (Figure 10)



Figure 10 Schubert D664 score examples (48-57)

Schubert was in an era when classical and romantic coexisted, and the composers of this period were very rich in their inner feelings, full of resentment and dissatisfaction with the social status quo and longing and aspiration for a free life; the simple harmonic language of the classical period could not support the rich inner world of the artists. Therefore, a large number of dissonant chords began to appear in the early Romantic works: seventh chords, ninth chords, distant relational transposition, chromaticism, etc. Schubert's works also reflect some features of the Romantic harmonic language, such as the successive progression of sub-triads and the application of subgenus and off-key chords[6]. For example, a large number of off-key subgeneric chords are used, and the use of equal temperament, transposition to the distant relational key, echoing the complete termination of the section, breaks through the restrictions of the balanced and complete formal structure of classical music in terms of musical form, and has a free expression of the Romantic period (Figure 11).



Figure 11 Schubert D664 score examples (28-42)

Due to the political situation of the restoration of the feudal dynasties in Europe, the political turmoil throughout Europe in the 19th century, the rise and fall of various schools of thought and

artistic styles, and the natural expression of strong individuality and emotion became the evaluation criteria of the new artistic trend, and artists pursued freedom and liberation, emphasizing the affirmation of self-worth. Therefore, the Romantic music style tends to be more individualized, with the free switching of major and minor keys, the flexible use of distant and near relationships and transposition, and the diversification of musical genres and forms.

Schubert's work has the rational and rigorous framework of classicalism, but the very singable melody and rich harmonic language are full of unrestrained romantic expression of the desire for freedom. It is a work of rich emotion within a rigorous structure, achieving a high degree of unity between sensuality and rationality, instinct and reason, imagination and normality, endless longing and restraint, unrestrained emotional expression and calm reflection, forming a music of deep fusion of classicism and romanticism[7].

4. Conclusion

In summary, the first movement of Schubert's Sonata in A major, D664, is based on the classical structure of regular layout, symmetrical presentation of weaving and harmony, but Schubert gives it a more fluid and singing melodic composition and weaving, as well as a richer use of tonal modulation, so that the form of the classical sonata can be better adapted to the delicate and rich emotional needs of Romanticism.

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