

## Brief Analysis on Independent Creation of National Style of Chinese Piano Music

SU Shu<sup>[a],\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Academy of Music, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China.  
\*Corresponding author.

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### Abstract

Piano music originated from foreign countries but has its characteristics after integrating into China, so this piano music is called Chinese piano music. The national style of piano music is most unique in the development history of Chinese piano music. With the currently prevailing national style, the national style of Chinese piano music can develop in a long term and more piano music works with unified the spirit and form and their distinct national characteristics can spring up only through continuous innovations and independent creations. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the course of independent creation was started in Chinese piano music, especially, music works of national style. During the exploration and creation of piano musicians, they ceaselessly integrate national music with the independent creation methods and skills of western music, keep pace with the times and have made breakthrough progress.

**Key words:** Piano music; National style; Independent creation

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there are relatively mature achievements and systems in the development and research of Chinese piano music. Besides, the national style of piano music

has its own irreplaceable development features and influences with respect to independent creation. Piano music composers integrated the ingenious transition of musical notations with the musical expression techniques of Chinese national characteristics, and released numerous amazing music pieces by means of independent creation. The creative development of national style of Chinese piano music pieces is synchronous with the times, is continuously perfected during its development, and has its own unique features in the world piano music.

### 1. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT CREATION OF NATIONAL STYLE OF CHINESE PIANO MUSIC

After the national style of Chinese piano music experienced the development course for a hundred years, the diversified national musical cultures have formed the unique national style of Chinese piano music, and are also the treasures accumulated by piano musicians in their lifetime with respect to musical cultivation, piano language, historical background, cultural habits and many other aspects. From the perspective of musical connotation of piano, there is no significant bound. However, people, who live in various regions with different cultures, have different understandings and feelings about piano. Therefore, the formation of national style of piano culture is also a process of critical inheritance of “adopting the essence and abandoning the dross”. The pattern of manifestation of western piano language is inevitably used for reference in the development of national style of Chinese piano language, but more national elements with Chinese characteristics are replenished so as to achieve the effect of unified spirit and form. In addition, the creation of national style of Chinese piano music is not only deeply restrained by the law of art development but also influenced by both the historical background and

regional environment, so an independent creation course with distinct styles of times, schools and regions has been formed.

(a) The start of independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music: Pianos had always been luxuries among the nobles since they were introduced to royal households in China. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the upsurge in school songs, the trend of piano learning in the educational center of schools swept the country, so people gradually had general knowledge and understanding about piano. Since the initial piano music pieces had national colors since they were created, so the independent created in this period was the start.

(b) The development and exploration process of independent creation of Chinese piano music with national style: *The March of Peace*, China's first piano music, was created by Zhao Yuanren in 1915. After the creation of this piano music, a series of works were created by combining the creative methods and expressive ways for Chinese traditional music with foreign piano musical cultures. Then, Chinese piano culture entered into the new stage of independent creation. *Chinese Cowboy With His Flute*, works of musician *He Luting*, and *Chinese Flute at Midnight* composed by composer Qu Jiajiang etc. were all the representative works of this period. From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, abundant piano music pieces with national style recomposed on the basis of original model opera, music and songs emerged in the Chinese piano music works with national style. In the 1980s, the reform and opening-up policies facilitated the development of independent creation of national style of piano culture. All sorts of piano music pieces entered into their explosive creative phases and composers began to explosively get involved in composition. Thus, there were vivifying development tendency and state for the creation of Chinese piano music, especially the independent creation of national style.

(c) The prosperity of independently created Chinese piano music pieces with national style: As the economic basis determines the superstructure, with the rapid advance in economic development of China and the formation of a mass flourishing situation in Chinese culture, Chinese piano music has been developed into a new height. However, it is required to pay attention to elements with national characteristics to make Chinese music culture to win a place in the diversified musical styles in the world. This is also proved by facts. In recent years, Chinese piano music works with national style, especially, those new works created independently have sprung up abundantly, and are more likely to be accepted and praised by the piano music circle of the world. Furthermore, the world-renowned pianists such as Li Yundi, Shen Wenyu, Hu Dingqi and Lang Lang have become the most irreplaceable sparkling stars on the piano music stage in the world.

(d) The bottleneck and outlook of independent creation of Chinese piano music with national style: The creation and theoretical research of piano music works with Chinese style can become flourishing and popular in the world through joint efforts by numerous composers and pianists. Many repeated or outdated works appeared unavoidably during creation of piano music with national style. Since innovation is required for the development of culture, Chinese piano music can become a spring pond with infinite vitalities when being stimulated and stirred by new elements. For instance, the *Chinese Cowboy with His Flute* by He Luting in 1934 has a far-reaching significance and influence because of its catchy rhythm and conception as well as its tune and artistic conception with distinct national characteristics. In recent years, large quantities of piano music works containing national characteristics have been entered into the horizon of common people, have become more gracious and have been circulated more widely. However, we must face the current situation that the creation of Chinese piano music works with national style is largely different from the trend and characteristics of piano music development. Not only the quantity but also the quality cannot reach those of the piano music works of the world. Besides, there are some gaps in the creation conception, techniques and musician's qualities. We can achieve the Chinese charm in the path of independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music by making efforts in many ways and perseverance.

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## 2. EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS ON METHODS FOR INDEPENDENT CREATION OF NATIONAL STYLE OF CHINESE PIANO MUSIC

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“Only those which belong to the nation belong to the world”, so only the Chinese piano music works with “Chinese style” can integrate into the world. Especially, national system has become a benchmarking element in the field of music in modern times with inundant cultures. Chinese piano music early surpassed the characteristics and style endowed by the times because of its diversified fusion forms, and all kinds of special national and regional styles. After continuous explorations by pianists and composers, the creation of Chinese piano music integrated the essences of national music, such as the temperament, rhythm and sounds, based on absorbing the ensemble manifestation pattern and creation means of advanced foreign piano music, and thus formed the piano music system and culture with outstanding Chinese national style. The independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music mainly lies in the recreation and development of national melodies, all sorts of tones with folk characteristics and various national music appeals in

piano music. In this process of development, all kinds of discussions about the national style genres of piano music were triggered; besides, all sorts of excellent piano music works sprung up.

(a) Independent creation of national melody of Chinese piano music. The melody is the sole and foundation of a piece of music works, especially piano music works. Only a rhythmical, methodical and interspersing melody formed via ingenious artistic conception can become a classic melody. Chinese national culture shows its diversified national characteristics due to the different regions and languages, so the creative space is more three-dimensional and abundant. Among classic Chinese piano music works, especially those in the period after the establishment of new China are the most representative and highly developed. In this phase, piano musicians boldly added national melodies to the creation of piano music, and integrated the distinct national melodies into the performance of modern piano works by combining the performance rhythms of special musical instruments of all nationalities so as to bestow the characteristics of national music instruments to piano works. This kind of music works is characterized by the imitation and recreation of the tone of national music, and forming piano music rhythms with rich national characteristics through the permutation and combination of abundant musical notes and structures etc.. There is no lack of representatives of piano works generated through fusion and creation of national rhythms. For instance, in the *Poems of Rural Seasonal Phenomena* composed by Jiang Wen, the composer recreated a piece of new combined music works by integrating twelve works with completely different styles and interlinked contents; he showed his own ingenuity in independent creation by adding the rhythmical sound techniques of strumming, shaking, slapping and stirring of Chinese lute as well as the playing techniques of up-and-down glissando and gliss of Guzheng, and created a piece of music works of the times with its unique national style. Therefore, the works perfectly manifested the independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music.

(b) Independent creation of tone of Chinese piano music with national characteristics. The national style of Chinese piano music is mainly embodied in using tones in folk music for reference, so piano music works created based on folk music are the important aspect of independent creation of Chinese piano music. As for this aspect, the most typical characteristic is the recreation and fusion of folk tones. Because of the extremely high popularity of folk songs, works created by processing and innovating the raw materials of tones in folk songs are more likely to be understood by the public. In addition, ancient folk songs, which sparkle with new vitality, are more nationally charming. In this aspect, the *Chinese Cowboy With His Flute*, which won the first prize of "award of Chinese-style piano music", is the most

representative one. This piece of music works created by He Luting was the first piece of Chinese piano works in the international music circles. The *Chinese Cowboy With His Flute* with the unique folk tone as the main tone of piano music works is widely different from foreign piano music. Audiences are touched by the wonderful artistic conception created by him with graceful nationalized rhythms. This piece of works formed through his independent creation not only expresses earnest emotions but also enables people to be deeply affected by the scenes described in music as if they experienced them in person. Therefore, such a piece of works is of echo-making significance in independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music. Besides, we have a lot of works like this. For instance, musician Zhou Guangren recomposed the *Thirty-Mile Shop*, a minor folk song, into *Variations on a Folk Song of North Shaanxi*, a piece of storytelling piano music works. A piece of music with distinct national style was formed by combining regional folk tones with the harmonic language; furthermore, the fierce collision between piano languages and folk tones add new vitality to traditional music works.

(c) Independent creation of national appeal of Chinese piano music. The national appeal, which is the sole and the highest realm of Chinese piano music works, is the standard to judge whether a piece of music works is mature. The creation of Chinese piano music entered into a flourishing period after the establishment of New China and the issuance of reform and opening-up policy. In this phase, many composers continuously tried all sorts of new techniques in a bold way for creation of piano music with national appeal. Meanwhile, with the influence of spirit of the times, music creators kept pace with the times, combined the embodiment of national appeal in music works with the trend of the times, and thus created piano music works with not only the typical national style but also innovative spirit. In this phase, *A Dream in Heaven*, created by Wang Lisan, the most outstanding representative of piano music creators, is a piece of well-known Chinese piano music. This piece of works more perfectly manifests the distant artistic conception of the poem of the same title written by a poet in Tang Dynasty by imitating the twelve phonetic sequences and combining traditional tones. The *Calligraphy and Ode on Qin*, his another piece of works, is mixed with the artistic essences of Guqin and calligraphy, creates the artistic conception of an integral whole of poem, calligraphy and painting. The *Boat on a River in Spring*, a piece of piano music works created by Chu Wanghua in the same period, combines the traditional creation techniques and modern composition skills in order, and imitates foreign techniques, shows the national appeal and charm of music with the expression techniques of national music and local national tones. This works, which is implicit, exaggerated, low-profile and extravagant, reaches the extreme pursuit for national

appeal in independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music.

### 3. KEY POINTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INDEPENDENT CREATION OF NATIONAL STYLE OF CHINESE PIANO MUSIC

(a) During the independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music, it is most crucial to intensify Chinese elements in piano music creation. The world's acceptance of nationalities in Chinese piano music can be intensified only by adding the musical styles of various nationalities and regions. Thus, in particular, the young generation of piano music creators needs to experience and learn the nationalities and the characteristics of national cultures more deeply, and can create piano music works with Chinese style by making innovations, creations or secondary compositions of elements with national style.

(b) Not only Chinese elements are required but also modern elements are required to advance with the times in the process of independent creation of national style in Chinese piano music. Only in this way, can be the single inflexible phenomenon in music works avoid so that music can become more diversified and flexible. Cultural collision can give birth to more excellent works through integration of the past and the present and integration of nationalization and modernization.

(c) Pay attention to inheritance of national culture of piano music. As it is easy to produce many "fast-food" cultural products due to the rapid development of the times, it is required to lay stress on inheritance and development if we want to make Chinese piano music works with national music to development continuously, even be handed down and obtain more acceptance and cultural identity. Publicity and education are the most important platforms for popularizing and propagating piano music. Use piano music with Chinese style as the key point of publicity and teaching on the national mainstream media and educational institutions so as to enhance the public's ability to understand and appreciate piano music works of their nationalities. This can help achieve a direct line of succession of independent innovation in the national style of Chinese piano culture.

(d) The independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music is of profound significance. After more than 100 years, large quantities of Chinese composers and performers integrated elements with Chinese national style in creation of piano works in various ways, and accumulated abundant theoretical bases and creative experience through ceaseless imitation, learning, exploration and innovation. These composers exploited Chinese piano music works with national

characteristics by cleverly combining national elements with contemporary composition methods. In recent years, with the growing influence of China in the world and the substantial improvement people's living standard, outstanding achievements have been made in education, creation, performance, theories and many other aspects of national style of Chinese piano music. In view of the combination of national culture and modern culture, many composers and performers realized the significance of independently creating piano music works with Chinese style, so they actively created piano works with national style, and made important contributions to the flourishing and development of Chinese piano music culture with national style. The creation of integrating Chinese national characteristic cultures into piano music gives new cultural connotation and profound music conception to piano music works so that the excellent Chinese national cultures can be properly and poetically integrated into creation of contemporary piano works. On the background of new times, the independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music, which has a far-reaching influence, not only meets people's aesthetic pursuit but also is the fundamental to maintain the long-standing spreading of Chinese piano music culture.

### CONCLUSION

Although Chinese piano music was started late in the development trend of world piano music, there is breakthrough progress after the old, middle-aged and young piano music composers made unremitting efforts, and Chinese piano music rose in the world music. Regardless of creative methods, strong national characteristics are given to Chinese music works including piano music. Especially, with respect to independent creation, piano music works with Chinese national style is the most representative. It is a long process to explore the independent creation of national style of Chinese piano music. Since the last century, piano music composers and performers have devoted all their energy to continuously facilitate creation of piano music with Chinese national style to enter into new development phases one by one, and thus such creation can gradually approach the leading level in the world. However, above all, the history and foundation of piano development in China are far behind the western countries. To realize a real sense of independent creation, the culture with Chinese native national music style should be used as the basis; besides, we need actively use classics and characteristics in foreign piano language as reference to gradually form Chinese piano music with national style. This is not only the inevitable trend to realize matured development of Chinese piano music but also the only way for independent creation of national style of piano music.

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