

# **STUDYING COLLABORATIVE PIANO WORKS FOR TEACHING COLLABORATIVE PIANO PERFORMANCE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN SHENZHEN TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, CHINA**

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## **Abstract**

The collaborative piano course is an important teaching content, which not only helps to improve the piano performance ability of students but also helps to cultivate a large number of professional collaborative pianists for the country and society and promotes the development of music art. This research article aims to show the collaborative studying of piano works for teaching collaborative piano performance to college students at Shenzhen Technology University, China. This research uses a mixed method by using an experimental group with no controlled group, and the time limit for experimenting is 15 weeks.

The research result was the guidebook following the teaching plans. After 18 weeks of teaching, there will be a final concert as the formative test for students and evaluate the teaching results according to the final concert. The music in the guidebook includes 20 pieces of collaborative piano works, including chamber music repertoire, art songs, opera arias, piano and instruments sonatas, and Chinese traditional folk songs with traditional instruments.

**Keywords:** collaboration piano, teaching collaborative piano, piano performance, China

## **Introduction**

The collaborative piano is a discipline of music that combines piano performance, accompaniment, and music pedagogy (and often, vocal coaching). In the early 1990s, the famous American pianist Samuel Sanders put forward the "Collaborative Piano" concept. Later, North America and Europe established this new name to highlight the piano's equal status and artistic influence with other musical instruments and singers. Most colleges and universities in Europe have higher-level professional teaching, such as undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students, many conservatories in China have also started to set up collaborative piano as a curriculum. Still, the music collage of universities in China has not had it yet (Yu, 2017). Although it is in the initial stage of development, the collaborative piano course has shown its important impact on piano students, and collaborative pianists are in great demand. For example, as we know, piano performers in symphony orchestras often undertake many tasks, such as music part and early opera accompaniment. Many music works need corresponding piano accompaniment; Therefore, a large number of piano accompaniment teachers and students have gradually emerged (Shi, 2018).

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the collaborative piano works
2. To construct collaborative piano workbook for music students at Shenzhen technology university.
3. To use the guidebook to teach collaborative piano to students in experimental group.
4. To evaluate the efficiency of teaching by using the collaborative piano workbook.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concepts of collaborative piano**

The term "collaborative piano" refers to the art of piano performance in cooperation with vocal music, instrumental music, and other art forms, emphasizing the equality and importance of the piano in cooperation. Before this definition, art was commonly referred to as piano accompaniment. The collaborative piano can be said to be the product of the development of piano

accompaniment in the 20th century. It has an inseparable relationship with the development history of piano accompaniment.

In the United States, the term "piano accompaniment" first appeared in 1860 in an advertisement for a performance in Time Magazine. The piano educator of the time, Robert Goldbach, divided his students into three categories: the first-class who got to recital Chopin and Liszt in the final concert; Second-class talents could be soloists, mainly to the direction of teachers training; Third - class talents can accompany vocal music at the annual concert. Despite the unprecedented prosperity of the music market in the 19th century, there was a huge demand for piano accompaniment in concerts. Still, due to people's attitude towards piano accompaniment, there was a shortage of piano players who were able and willing to play the accompaniment well (Chen, 2018). There are not a few examples of a concert being ruined by a lack of piano accompaniment, as can be seen by the music critics of the time. A New York Times music review wrote of an 1874 vocal concert that "two singers were given every excuse on the spot to 'kill their accompanist. At that time, the piano accompaniment was not only ignored by people but also by the piano players themselves. The low-performance quality and standard further reduced the status of piano accompaniment in the music industry, forming an unhealthy circular pattern. In the 20th century, the music stage gradually appeared with many outstanding piano accompanists (Liu & Liao, 2009). They try to break the prejudice as the piano accompaniment. Still, because of the influence of the past almost one hundred years, the piano accompanist doesn't play regarded as a soloist with artists, more even when the same thing as the bag for the soloist waiter. Fortunately, these outstanding piano accompanists are willing to take a serious attitude towards the art of piano accompaniment to study this art. Benefiting from the change of the 20th-century concert repertoire (19th century is given priority to with technique of gambling, track design. In the 20th century, classical music (such as sonata and art songs) was added to the programs of the greater demands of the complexity of the songs on the piano. Piano accompanists also have the Spaces of more put to good use. as time goes on, these outstanding piano accompanists not only won the trust and respect of peers in the music world more pushed the art to an unprecedented height, leading the people to a whole new view of the art. People who don't necessarily play accompaniment can play the piano. Piano accompaniment is a need for special learning skills (Liu, 2017).

In 1947, renowned vocal accompanist Gwendolyn Kodolfsky created the first-ever piano accompanying degree program at the University of Southern California. The aim is to provide a venue and comprehensive training program for young pianists interested in piano accompaniment repertoire and this skill. Since the Master of Music degree was not popular in the United States then, the degree program for piano accompaniment was set at the undergraduate level. In the mid-1950s, the University of Southern California offered a master's degree in piano accompaniment. In 1969, the University of Southern California offered the world's first doctorate in piano accompaniment. The students cultivated by this school have become the core educational force of piano accompaniment in American colleges and universities (Li, 2016).

In 1989, pianist Alan Smith took over Kodovsky's teaching position at USC and renamed the piano accompaniment program Keyboard Collaborative Arts. The word collaborative is used instead of accompaniment because the word "companion" (accompanying) in piano accompaniment cannot fully reflect the real equal, cooperative relationship in music. The term collaboration was coined by pianist Samuel Sanders, one of the founders of the Accompaniment program at Juilliard. According to Margo Garrett, when Sanders was looking up a dictionary to think of renaming the major, the word Collaborating had such a meaningful meaning that Sanders thought it was a better expression of collaborative relationships in music. In musical cooperation, each music performer has their cognition and ideas about the work. To jointly present a complete musical work, they must achieve the ultimate goal through cooperation. The word collaborative in Chinese translation is usually translated as cooperation or collaboration (Jiang, 2018). In the advanced Chinese dictionary interpretation, the word "cooperation" means cooperating to do something, which is closer to the original interpretation. However, due to the homophony of the word "collaborative" and "harmony," the translation of collaborative seems to be more popular. Since the "First CCOM Collaborative Piano Art Festival" in 2014, the term "collaborative piano" has been widely accepted, gradually replacing "piano accompaniment."

The name "collaborative piano" is now widely accepted in the music world, but since many music schools had not changed the name they used when the discipline was first created, We still see accompaniment collaborative Arts (Collaborative Arts), Keyboard Arts, chamber/instrumental collaborations (Chamber) Music), Art Direction/Vocal Collaboration (Coaching) and Ensemble Arts. In order to avoid confusion, I will use the term "collaborative piano" to

refer to the art of piano performance in collaboration with vocal, instrumental, and other forms of art.

## **2. The formation and development of collaborative piano program in American universities and colleges**

The Collaborative Piano Major was founded in the United States in the 1950s, and after 70 years, a mature education system has been formed. Its birth comes from people's recognition of this art. Its rapid development proves its demand in the classical music world can be valued. Collaborative Piano The specialty is the vitamin tablets of music colleges. The services it provides can promote the development of music specialty, But at the same time, it also has the educational task of training professional collaborative piano players. How to balance the relationship between service and education is what every college with a collaborative piano major must face. In recent years, the collaborative piano has developed in an all-round way in China, this paper analyzes the educational system of collaborative piano majors in the United States, and it has provided a reference for the future development of collaborative piano in courses in China.

### **The necessity of collaborative piano developing in China**

Understanding of the system of the independent professional discipline of collaborative piano. Comparing the current situation of domestic collaborative piano course, the author makes the reflections and summaries and then more clearly realize the inevitability and importance of the development of collaborative piano in China and the necessity of filling in the field of music performance, hoping that it can guide the continuous improvement and innovation of practice and teaching (Du, 2017).

### **Research Methodology**

This research used a mixed-method approach. The population is 27 first-year music students at Shenzhen technology university divided into 2 groups: Group 1 is 17 piano students; Group 2 is 10 students of other instruments and vocalists. These 27 students are all used as the sample. The period of experimenting is 15 weeks.

### **Results**

### **The collaborative piano works using in the research**

1. Mozart: Piano Trio in G, K.564;
2. Mozart: Piano Quartet No.1 in G minor, K.478
3. Schubert, The Trout Quintet
4. Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No.1 in D Minor, Op.49, MWV Q29
5. Brahms' Piano Quartet No. 1
6. Trio élégiaque No.1 in G minor for Piano, Violin and Cello
7. Beethoven's Grand Duke Trio
8. Saint-saint, Carnival of the Animals
9. R.Strauss: Piano Trio No. 1 in A major, AV 37

### **The piano workbook for music students**

Researchers have chosen 20 pieces of collaborative piano works, including chamber music repertoire, art songs, opera arias, piano, and instruments sonatas, Chinese traditional folk songs with traditional instruments, etc.

### **Using the guidebook to teach collaborative piano to students in experimental group**

Teach students with a guidebook and follow the teaching plans. After 18 weeks of teaching, there will be a final concert as the formative test for students, and evaluate the teaching results according to the final concert.

### **The efficiency of teaching by using the collaborative piano workbook**

After doing the research, we could implement a curriculum of collaborative piano courses suitable for Shenzhen Technology University Music, and college students could benefit from this course. With the rapid development of social and spiritual civilization construction, China's college piano curriculum is increasingly in line with international standards, to the high level of social concern. In the music professional courses of colleges and universities in China, the collaborative piano course is an important learning content, which not only helps to improve the piano performance ability of students but also helps to cultivate a large number of collaborative professional pianists for the country and society, and promote the development of music art in China. In improving aesthetic education in colleges and universities, colleges and universities must

recognize the importance of collaborative piano curricula and constantly build a modern collaborative piano curriculum system in the reform to promote the continuous improvement of piano teaching quality in colleges and universities.

Generally speaking, Collaborative Piano (also known as Piano accompaniment, piano art direction, piano chamber music, etc., collectively referred to as "Collaborative Piano" in this paper) is different from solo Piano performance, which is mainly aimed at cultivating Collaborative Piano players. In China, collaborative piano not only started late but also developed slowly. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the music form of piano performance and piano accompaniment had just appeared in China. In the subsequent development, with the rapid development of music culture and the continuous popularization of mass music activities, the form of piano accompaniment has been widely used. However, piano accompaniment is nothing more than accompaniment. The essence of the change from piano accompaniment to the collaborative piano is a clash of old and new ideas. Abandoning the backward concept of music development and actively seeking Chinese collaborative piano to keep up with the world will help to promote the rapid development of Chinese music art. The collaborative piano has a certain complexity and profundity, which requires the active cooperation of all players and pianists to achieve a high level of performance together.

### **Briefly describe the development of collaborative piano**

Since the advent of the piano, it has often appeared in musical performances as a solo or ensemble. Strictly speaking, piano cooperation with other instruments precedes piano solos. In the Western world in the Middle Ages, religion was quite popular. Churches of different sizes were often seen on both sides of the streets in Europe, where many citizens gathered to sing religious songs accompanied by organ accompaniment. In the court of the feudal nobles then, the clavichord was often used to play with other instruments, which brought great pleasure to court life then.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the world's first real piano was born. Its performance function was greatly improved, helping many musicians complete many beautiful musical works and become outstanding instrument performances then. At that time, piano performance with other instruments did not decline. With the development of society, musicians to piano music creation, more depending on constantly inspiring musicians inspiration at the same time, made many world-famous piano works of cooperation with many kinds of

Musical Instruments constantly present in front of the world, has injected new vitality into the music development of human beings, but also greatly promoted the rapid development of world music.

In the chamber music concert, the piano not only appears as a solo but also plays with other instruments, gradually becoming the most important instrument in the concert. In addition, the German-Austrian vocal art song singing, born in the 19th century, also proudly mounted the forefront of the concert stage with the accompaniment of the piano and was warmly sought after by the general audience. At the beginning of the 19th century, many composers, represented by German composer Schubert, made bold innovations in vocal music creation, thus producing art songs. These songs use poetry as lyrics and treat piano playing as much as vocal singing. In the performance, the song extends the emotion of the death poem, and the music sublimates the artistic conception of the poem to achieve the mutual integration of poetry, songs, and piano, presenting different performance feelings and styles and promoting the continuous improvement of artistic taste. The rise and widespread singing of art songs not only effectively promoted the development of European chamber music but also greatly promoted the position of piano in vocal music performance, and finally realized the transformation from accompaniment to collaboration.

The piano became more popular in the last century, and its cooperation with instrumental and vocal music became closer. The audience's love for the piano is gradually improving, and the attention to the piano is gradually improving. The diversity of musical performance forms has gradually made people realize that piano cooperation has undergone significant changes and formed an independent art. Cooperative artists can participate in collaborative piano performances through the necessary professional training.

## **Discussion**

### **The importance of the transition from piano accompaniment to collaborative piano in China**

At the end of the 20th century, Wuhan Conservatory of Music recruited the first graduate student of piano art direction. In 2008, it began to recruit undergraduate students of this major. So far, Wuhan Conservatory of Music has trained many excellent music professionals for the country and society, widely



recognized and affirmed by all walks of life. Wuhan Conservatory of Music often invites foreign musicians to give lectures to learn foreign advanced concepts and methods and actively seek innovation because of the problems existing in its development. The traditional single course is gradually transformed into a systematic and diversified collaborative piano course. Various music and song competitions are actively held, and separate accompaniment prizes are set up in the competitions. To a certain extent, the practice of Wuhan Conservatory of Music promoted the development of collaborative piano in China and played a key role in laying the foundation (Song, 2017).

In 2014, China held the first music festival with collaborative piano as the core, which is of great significance to developing collaborative piano in China and selecting compound music talents. After continuous development, piano accompaniment gradually changed to the collaborative piano, showing its importance. First, it can lead to the correct cognitive coordination of the piano. As told by musicians in China, the concept of the Chinese piano needs to be changed, abandon those old ideas behind the piano, need to develop in the direction of collaborative development of the Chinese piano. Piano art characteristic is cooperative. To reflect on the piano professionally, you must cultivate the system, which is a long-term effort. Secondly, it can promote the rapid development of the piano industry in China. The collaborative piano has a strong professional and practical, whether piano and instrumental music cooperation or piano and vocal music cooperation, will be a long and complicated process. The collaborative piano is not in a secondary position in the music performance process. Piano, instrumental music, and vocal music in music performance play an important role and are indispensable. They show the relationship is complementary to each other and promote each other. A good collaborative piano in the performance should first keenly capture the mood of the work (in the prelude) to give the singer hints in the climax to give the singer foil and promote. Especially in opera accompaniment, the piano should replace the orchestra to play symphonic sounds, act as the conductor, and be responsible for directing the whole work. A good collaborative pianist should know how to play the piano and, more importantly, coordinate and cooperate with the various parts of the piano (Liu, 2013). These operations and cognition require rich artistic and theoretical knowledge, solid experience in piano playing skills, and the practice of cooperating with others. The transformation from piano accompaniment to collaborative piano is a challenge between old and new ideas.

Only by abandoning the traditional backward ideas and constantly learning and mastering new academic knowledge can we promote the development of the Chinese collaborative piano and gradually integrate it into the world's music development and achieve greater development achievements. At the same time, this change also makes people realize that collaborative piano has great development space, and practitioners must continue exploring and developing.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, with the rapid development of society, the music industry pays more and more attention to piano performance, which has generated a broad mass base. In western countries, the collaborative piano has formed a mature curriculum system, but there is a big gap in this respect in China. It is necessary for the music major in colleges and universities to strengthen the curriculum construction, to promote the rapid development of collaborative piano in China.

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