

# Thoughts on how to implement multi-dimensional teaching of Chinese-style piano works in Chinese universities

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## Abstracts

Chinese-style piano music works have increased in popularity in recent years. Chinses government released many policies regarding the application of Chinese culture to music and arts, which make the music college need to enhance the knowledge about combining music and Chinese culture. Chinese style piano is one of the famous music styles in China and worldwide. The uniqueness of Chinese style piano makes the teaching pedagogy quite complex and needs to study deeply. This article aims to elaborate on the strategies and methods to promote the teaching and training of the Chinese-style piano works from three aspects of the piano major in Chinese universities to guide the development of teaching Chinese piano in music colleges.

**Keywords:** Multi-Dimension Teaching, Chinese-Style Piano, Chinese University

## Introduction

In the 1930s, the Russian-American pianist Qierpin came to China through the newspaper to collect piano works in "Chinese style." He Luting, who was studying at the Shanghai National Music College at that time, won the championship with a piece of "Shepherd's Piccolo" that he created and composed and became the "spokesperson" of the "Chinese-style" piano music in that period. Nearly half a century later, Professor Wei Tinger of the China National Academy of Arts evaluated "Shepherd's Piccolo" as "the first full-fledged Chinese piano piece" and praised it as "the first flower on the tree of Chinese piano art." It can be said that since the "Shepherd's Piccolo" in 1934, Chinese-style piano music has "sparkled" on the modern art stage with a "stunning" figure. Since then, after nearly 90 years of baptism, generations of Chinese piano composers have worked hard to create works such as "Vertical Flute and Drum in the Sunset," "Hundred Birds and Phoenix," "Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms," "Liuyang River," "The Day of Turning Over," "Shandong Custom Suite" and "Pi Huang," which are well-known at home and abroad, have won their due place in the world music scene for "Chinese-style piano works."

In this case, the Chinese-style piano music works should also be included in the teaching content system of the piano major in Chinese universities to build up a whole country. Therefore, we will elaborate on the strategies and methods to promote the teaching and training of the Chinese-style piano works from many aspects of the piano major in Chinese universities.

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## **Grasp the nationalized harmonic writing and arrangement techniques, and promote the development of Chinese-style piano music teaching through the impromptu creative and improvisation**

The reason why masterpieces of modern piano music such as "Shepherd's Piccolo" and "Vertical Flute and Drum in the Sunset" can be filled with a distinct "Chinese style" is inseparable from the extensive use of nationalized harmonic writing and arrangement techniques. This is because the harmonic writing technique used in Chinese-style piano pieces embodies the artistic thinking characteristics of national music, which can also help the works to be filled with a distinct "Chinese music style and charm" (Fang, 2018 : 24).

In the long-term piano music creation practice, Chinese composers have developed a variety of national pentatonic chord forms. For example, various forms of additional tone chords, substitute tone chords, ellipsis chords, four-fifth superposed structural chords, etc., are the representative types of national pentatonic chords. Its common feature is that the scales originally distributed in the pentatonic melody are vertically stacked according to a certain logic, thus forming a unique type of national music chord. The "Pipa chord" among the four-fifth superposed structural chords is a typical representative (Fang, 2019 : 64). For example, Jiang Wenye used the chord form of "Zhi-Gong-Shang-Zhi" in the piano piece "Beijing Wanhua Collection - Under the Forbidden City." It not only vertically superimposes the three pentatonic scales of "Zhi, Gong, and Shang" to form a structure similar to the tuning method of the national musical instrument pipa but also contains two common melodies in national music, the perfect fourth and the perfect fifth. Vertical stacking of intervals.

It can be seen that the tonal thinking of folk music and its melody development thinking has been "condensed" and covered in the pipa chord "Zhi-Gong-Shang-Zhi." And nationalized piano music pieces like "Under the Forbidden City" can easily convey a distinct "Chinese style" and national sentiment by using the pentatonic chord form that condenses the thinking characteristics of national music. In addition to specific nationalized chord forms, special harmonic progression techniques such as "parallel progression of fourth and fifth chords" commonly used in national piano music are also an effective way to reflect "Chinese style" and national sentiment. For example, the piano arrangement "Vertical Flute and Drum in the Sunset" starts from the 155th bar and arranges the parallel progression of pipa chords for 10 consecutive bars. This not only imitates the "hanging" technique of the national musical instrument pipa but also weakens the harmonic effect of the traditional third superposed chord because it contains many parallel progressions of fourth and fifth harmonic intervals and contains the linear melody thinking of national music. Characteristics, thus conveying the deep and distant sentiment that fits the artistic conception of the music.

Introduce nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques to enrich the teaching content and forms of improvisation and improvisational accompaniment and promote the development of Chinese-style piano music teaching from point to area

Since the use of nationalized harmonic writing and arrangement techniques is an important way for piano works to show the "Chinese style," to effectively promote the implementation of Chinese style piano works teaching in the university's music department, it is necessary to integrate the nationalized harmonic writing with the "Chinese style." The teaching and training of the arrangement method are placed in a prominent position. However, given that college piano majors are already under great pressure to carry out the teaching of Western piano repertoire simultaneously and folk piano repertoire within the effective class time, it is easy to foresee that only by refining or extensively practicing many folk piano

repertoires, students will be promoted in a short period. In-depth understanding and proficiency in the nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques within time is a difficult goal to achieve.

Then it is better to find another way, adopt the guiding ideology of "integration of theory and practice, and apply what you have learned," and integrate the nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques into the teaching training of improvisation, which is expected to stimulate students' creative consciousness. Under the impetus of artistic practice, quickly comprehend the connotation of nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques, and gradually achieve a relatively proficient use. (Fang, 2021 : 45)

The specific method can be as follows. First, taking the relevant passages in various nationalized piano pieces as a model. Teachers use nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques to create special etudes and initially guide students to experience such harmony: acoustic characteristics and playing techniques of writing and arrangement techniques. Teaching and training modules for nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques are set up in the improvisational accompaniment course. And teachers guide students through improvisational arrangements for nationalization. Harmony and the way of progress to deeply grasp the substantive connotation and expressive skills of such techniques (Yang, 2016 : 66); finally, after the first two steps of teaching and training, students have formed a clearer perceptual understanding and a more profound rational understanding of the nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques. On this basis, the teacher selects a typical folk piano piece as the refined repertoire and, simultaneously, several folk piano pieces as the general repertoire to carry out the refinement and the general rehearsal, respectively. In this way, students can be guided to deeply recognize the expressive function and aesthetic characteristics of nationalized harmonic writing and arrangement techniques based on the musical situation of specific works to achieve a comprehensive cognition and proficient application of such techniques.

By using the methods and strategies listed above, the teaching of piano majors in colleges is expected to focus on nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques. It organically combines the actual needs for strengthening improvisational creation and improvisational accompaniment teaching enriching improvisational performances. At the same time, the teaching content can also promote the effective development of Chinese-style piano music teaching and training. It is expected to achieve the teaching effect of Chinese-style piano music with twofold results with half the effort within the limited class capacity.

### **Guide students to dabble in the classics of folk music in a targeted manner and improve their musical cultural accomplishment**

As the saying goes, what belongs to the nation is what belongs to the world. The nationalized piano repertoire can win a place for Chinese-style piano music in the world music scene because it is rooted in the fertile soil of national music and conveys a strong Chinese musical style and charm. Therefore, to promote the teaching and training of Chinese-style piano works in a multi-dimensional manner, college piano majors must guide students to dabble in the classics of folk music in a targeted manner to improve their cultural accomplishment of folk music. In the following, from the perspective of Chinese-style piano repertoire and the source of techniques, we will discuss the methods and strategies to guide students to dabble in the classic folk music repertoire.

A) The deep relationship between Chinese-style piano music and folk music

First of all, many modern Chinese-style piano pieces are arrangements of folk music. For example, "Vertical Flute and Drum in the Sunset " is adapted from the pipa song of the same name. "Hundred Birds and Phoenix" is adapted from the suona song of the same name. "Three Lanes of Plum Blossoms" is adapted from the vertical flute song of the same name, and "Shandong Customs Suite" is adapted from the folk songs of many places in Shandong... The list goes on and on. In this sense, to effectively teach Chinese-style piano music, it is necessary to guide students to dabble in some famous pieces of folk music. Secondly, modern Chinese style piano music widely adopts the expression techniques of folk music. For example, Cui Shiguang's "Good Night" draws on the melody development techniques of "changing the head and retaining the tail" and "changing the tail and retaining the head" of Jiangnan Sizhu and other ethnic ensemble music. "Hundred Birds and Phoenix" draws on and uses nationalized polyphonic writing techniques in many places; He Luting's "Lullaby" draws on the melody writing method of "Stretch" of folk songs. Zhang Chao's "Pi Huang" draws heavily on and uses Peking Opera Erhuang, Xipi's plate, and melody. It can be seen that Chinese-style piano music is deeply nourished by national music everywhere in terms of specific writing techniques (Ma, 2019 : 7).

B) With the help of micro-lectures, students are guided to dabble in the classics of folk music in a targeted manner.

The sources of the Chinese-style piano repertoire mentioned above have covered several performance techniques such as ethnic songs, ethnic instrumental music, and traditional operas. It can be seen that the sources of the performance techniques involved in Chinese-style piano repertoire are very complex and involve almost all aspects of national music. It is unrealistic to guide students to explore all aspects and genres of folk music within the limited class time. Therefore, we must grasp the applicable principles, introduce information-based teaching resources such as micro-lectures to expand students' after-school time, and guide students to explore the essence of ethnic music repertoire in a more targeted manner. This can be roughly divided into two steps: First of all, in the process of teaching Chinese-style piano music in detail, brief, general, and general practice, some micro-lecture videos showing specific techniques of folk music are interspersed at any time to help students explore and understand: how composers use piano performance techniques to Accurately express the acoustic characteristics of specific techniques of folk music. For example, when using "Xiao Drum in the Sunset" as an intensive lecture and refined repertoire, teachers can intersperse and provide some micro-lecture videos showing the acoustic characteristics of pipa techniques such as "hanging," "fingering," and "picking" for students to enjoy. Explore and study after class (Yao, 2019 : 6). Under the real-time guidance of teachers, through independent exploration, we can find out the key and mystery of using piano performance techniques to express the acoustic characteristics of specific techniques of folk music. This is not only a teaching process that inspires students to think and explore actively but also a music development process that stimulates students' interest in folk music.

Afterward, teachers can guide students to select specific folk instrumental music playing methods or folk songs, operas, and Quyi singing methods from new media terminals such as Kuaishou and Douyin as the imitation objects and try to use the learned piano performance techniques to simulate and express folk music singing or playing properly. The acoustic characteristics of playing are carried out, and interesting teaching and training are characterized by independent exploration. As the saying goes, those who know are not as good as those who are good, and those who are good are not as good as those who are happy. After arousing

students' interest in folk music through the previous stage of teaching, in this stage, teachers can guide students to independently choose folk music singing/playing techniques based on common new media platforms to try to simulate and express their acoustic characteristics. On the one hand, it enhances the dynamism and interest in teaching and training. On the other hand, it also helps students develop the awareness and habit of appreciating folk music and then drawing inspiration from folk music to create and perform piano pieces(Zhang, 2019:54). In this way, we can gradually improve students' cultural accomplishment of ethnic music subtly and gradually urge them to unconsciously develop lifelong learning and appreciation of ethnic music to achieve the goal of "quality education of Chinese style piano music teaching."

### **Integrating Chinese and Western piano music creation thinking and techniques to cultivate students' "active" artistic thinking**

Although Chinese style piano music has borrowed and even created and used a large number of ethnic music expression techniques or nationalized expression techniques, this reference, creation, and application is based on the integration with Western piano music. Because, after all, the piano is a Western musical instrument. Before the creation of Chinese-style piano music, the piano compositions, tonal layout, and conversion techniques, chord forms and harmonic progression techniques, and polyphonic writing techniques based on counterpoint in Western music were all very mature and developed. Solidification becomes a paradigm. Therefore, pioneers of Chinese-style piano musicians, such as Xiao Youmei, Zhao Yuanren, He Luting, etc., are based on Western piano music's creative thinking, musical structure, and writing techniques. Only by gradually creating nationalized expression techniques and piano vocabulary can we create Chinese-style piano works and promote their gradual development and improvement (Lai, 2019 : 66). Therefore, in this sense, Chinese-style piano music is naturally the artistic crystallization of the fusion of Chinese and Western music creation thinking and techniques. It is born with the artistic lineage of "combining Chinese and Western."

In this case, to promote the in-depth implementation of the teaching and training of Chinese-style piano works from multiple dimensions, the piano major in colleges and universities must focus on cultivating students' musical and artistic thinking of "integrating Chinese and Western." Specifically, teachers must compare and analyze the nationalized and Western-style creative techniques and creative thinking in Chinese-style piano repertoires and guide students to see from this comparative analysis that Chinese-style piano music authors are trying to achieve Chinese and Western music techniques. The ingenuity in the creative process is reflected in the blending "combination." Then people draw innovative thinking methods from the predecessors of Chinese-style piano music composers to guide their piano music writing, arrangement, and performance. In this way, students will be able to acquire "live" artistic thinking subtly, which will have a more profound impact on their careers (Cai, 2019 : 69).

For example, if "Shepherd's Piccolo" is used as the teaching piece, a teaching focus can be placed between the 25th and 32nd bars of the piece. In the left-hand part, Mr. He Luting arranged the harmonic progression of the third harmonic progression that is commonly used in Western music. However, Mr. He Luting arranged a single tone in front of each third harmonic interval. And in bars, 25-30, the pitches of these single notes are again the same. These several single notes mixed in the parallel progression of the third harmonic interval are like pulling up a horizontal "reference line" in the piano music texture so that the third harmonic derived from Western music here is in parallel. The sound function is weakened to a certain extent. This is

because Chinese folk music pays more attention to melody and relatively despise harmony effect, so from the audience's point of view, they are more likely to be attracted by the sound effect produced by the repetition of several single tones that form the horizontal "reference line." The third harmonic, the main body of the left-hand part, is not so easy to attract the audience's attention. Therefore, by using a series of intermittent repetitions of the same monophonic tone, Mr. He Luting, based on weakening the function and effect of Western harmony, made the texture of the left-hand part show a sense of melody line with a national style (Yu, 2019 : 89). As a result, it is more in line with the thinking and aesthetic characteristics of national music and enhances the attractiveness and affinity of piano music to Chinese audiences.

Although the above case is not very complicated, it vividly reveals the ingenuity of Chinese musicians in the creative process to promote the "combination" of Chinese and Western piano music techniques through organic changes. It shines with the brilliance of innovative musical and artistic thinking. Therefore, teachers should grasp the key points in Chinese-style piano works that can reflect the integration of Chinese and Western music thinking and techniques to carry out a comparison and fusion analysis of Chinese and Western piano music creative thinking and techniques to encourage students to learn from previous generations of musicians. And be used the "active" artistic thinking from the classic works to achieve the ultimate goal of Chinese-style piano music teaching.

## Conclusion

Chinese-style piano music works are the artistic crystallization of Chinese and Western styles, which embodies the efforts and wisdom inspired by Chinese composers in exploring the nationalization and localization of piano music. For piano majors in colleges and universities, Chinese-style piano music works are excellent teaching materials and should be promoted and applied in teaching practice (Cai, 2019 : 69). "Grasp the nationalized harmony writing and arrangement techniques, and promote the development of Chinese-style piano music teaching through improvisational creation and improvisation," "Guide students to dabble in traditional folk music classics in a targeted manner, and improve their musical, cultural accomplishment," "Integrate Chinese and Western music" Comparing and integrating the thinking and techniques of piano music creation, and cultivating students', 'active' artistic thinking" is the three teaching strategies of Chinese-style piano works summarized in this article by citing specific cases (Ma, 2019 : 7)

## Recommendation

To the majority of colleagues. It is hoped that this opportunity will inspire others to stimulate more extensive and in-depth dialectical thinking on this issue to jointly promote the multi-dimensional and in-depth development of Chinese-style piano music teaching and training for piano majors in colleges and universities (Yao, 2019 : 6).

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