

# Teaching Chinese Piano Rearrangement Music in University in China

Li Yeye,  
Nicha Pattananon and Tananchai Krithep<sup>3</sup>  
Bangkokthonburi University, Bangkok, Thailand  
Corresponding Author, E-mail: nicha.musiced@gmail.com

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## Abstracts

Piano music adapted from Chinese folk songs plays a very important role in Chinese piano works because there is a great difference in musical language between western piano music and Chinese folk music. Chinese folk music is mainly composed of pentatonic mode and seven-tone mode. The popularization of piano music through Chinese piano rearrangement makes it more advantageous for Chinese people to accept and understand. Rearrangement is the only way to popularize Chinese piano works and take this as a starting point to constantly enrich and develop the creation of Chinese piano music. Therefore, when college students play folk songs and adapt to piano music, they not only enrich the types of performance but also improve their professional quality. Music culture plays an important role in the campus cultural life. It is one of the essential means and practical measures for implementing quality education in colleges and universities, and also an important part of quality education in colleges and universities. This article presented the development of Chinese piano arrangement music and the teaching of this style of piano works in universities in China.

**Keywords:** Teaching Chinese Piano; Rearrangement Music; University in China

## Introduction

As a musical instrument from the west, the overall performance function of the piano brings new opportunities to the development of Chinese music. At the same time, under the research of many excellent composers and musicians in our country, the integrated development of Chinese traditional folk music has made the piano musical instrument in our country become a new source of vitality. Chinese traditional music has formed a new "Chinese style" in the piano adaptation, reflecting the vitality and plasticity of Chinese music and the piano's powerful transference and creative ability. Chinese piano rearrangement constantly forms its unique artistic characteristics and playing style. Chinese music is also keeping the traditional folk music aesthetic while creating modern art so that contemporary Chinese music continues to show a new edge.

In the early stage of the development of piano rearrangement, China put forward the development concept of "the west is the teacher" in the educational circle through the study of western music. Through the study of western music, Chinese music has been improved in mode and technology. During the ten-year Civil War and the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, some Chinese musicians with patriotic beliefs formed the organizations represented by the "Left-wing Opera Lianlian Music Group" and the "China Society for Emerging Music Studies," forming

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the powerful backbone of literature and art in the anti-Japanese Salvation singing movement. With the victory of the Anti-Japanese War, the creation of piano music in China reached a new stage, which was the stable development period of piano rearrangement. During this period, Chinese music composers began to learn music creation techniques from foreign countries, and folk songs were adapted and played on the piano gradually formed. At the same time, the content of the works was enriched, and the piano was endowed with some Chinese characteristics of melody, which further reflected the characteristics of Chinese and Western music. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China ushered in a new period in the history of music development, among which the most representative works are Mr. Chen Peixun's "Selling Groceries" and "Thinking of Spring." These excellent works have deeply impacted the prominence of the national characteristics of Chinese music. After the reform and opening up, Chinese piano rearrangement has occupied a place in the history of music development. Various new music cultures appeared in China, and composers began pursuing more novel creative techniques. Fresh creative ideas also added new colors to the creation of Chinese piano music, driving the development of Chinese piano music (Chang, 2000 : 15-16).

### **The development of piano rearrangement of Chinese Folk songs**

#### **The historical development of Chinese piano rearrangement music**

##### **1) The modern development periods**

The piano is a western musical instrument. With the rise of the early 20th century, with the exploration of "democracy" and "science" as the main social movements, people began to liberate their traditional ideas and accept new things. During this period, the western and our country's music have more blend and exchange. Since 1902, Chinese students have been sent to Europe, Japan, and other places for further study, so that young Chinese music majors also have more opportunities to expand the vision for the piano instrument in our country to develop the foundation.

Through the study of western musical skills, more musical patterns and musical techniques can be mastered by Chinese overseas students. After these overseas students returned home, new and old literary and artistic figures suggested constructing the Chinese musical culture system. They put forward the development and construction ideas of "the West is the teacher" for music creation and piano education. In 1921, Li Rongshu cited the Henan folk song "Wang Aunt fill cylinder" melody created a piano adaptation of "Saw big cylinder." The whole song was only 14 bars. The right hand is an obvious folk song melody, left hand with simple harmony and weave accompaniment, mostly for I-V-I or I-IV-V-I. This is the earliest birth of the piano adaptation.

##### **2) Preliminary development period**

Under the social background of the civil war, the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression, and the war of liberation in the 1930-the 40s, the creation of piano adaptation has been greatly influenced. During the ten years of the Civil War and the Anti-Japanese War, the Communist Party of China carried out anti-military encirclement and suppression operations. It gradually united the progressive forces of the Chinese cultural circle to carry out cultural anti-encirclement and suppression. At

that time, under the guidance of the Marxist theory of literature and art, with the proletarian revolutionary struggle and the complete liberation of the masses of workers and peasants as the goal, the "Left League" quickly formed, which included the music group. Revolutionary musicians advocated that the Left League music creation should be "proletarian in content and national in form." Under the gathering of patriotic musicians, the Chinese left United music and formed the anti-Japanese salvation singing movement of the backbone of literature and art. They use a variety of legal ways to promote patriotic salvation songs, to the "left Lianlian music group" and "China Emerging Music Research Society" as the representative of the music organization was established in Shanghai, the participants have Tian Han, Nie Er, Zhang Shu, Lv Ji, and others. (3) Stable development period

After 1945, with the changing situation of the international anti-fascist war, our country also began to fully enter a stage of counter-attack. The victory of the war of resistance against Japan brought new opportunities for Communist Party's liberation war. Music creation was more about folk songs and songs describing the production of workers and peasants—the current situation of people's lives, and singing praises to the Communist Party and ethnic minorities. After the founding of New China, with the implementation of the "Double hundred" policy, Chinese piano musicians began to learn piano rearrangement techniques from Soviet musicians, which provided great help for the creation of Chinese piano rearrangement music. Chinese piano rearrangements have been continuously integrated with other musical forms, such as model operas, traditional dramas, national music, folk songs, and revolutionary songs. Their contents have been greatly enriched. The expression forms of their works have also become more profound. The development of piano music in this period broke the inertia of western music, endowed piano music with some Chinese characteristics of melodic art, and realized the organic combination of Chinese music and Western music.

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With the loosening of various development policies of Chinese society through reform and opening up, the literary and art policy of "carrying forward literary and art democracy" and "creating and enlarging and diversifying" has also brought new

vitality to the creation of piano rearrangement music. More and more innovative concept music and lyric pop songs have obtained extensive creation and dissemination space, making piano music add more vitality to Chinese music creation. At the 7th Chinese Musicians Association, Liu Yunshan stressed that literary and artistic workers should follow the pace of The Times, conform to people's new expectations for cultural life, carry forward the main melody, and advocate diversification. This also encouraged the older piano composers to keep innovating in their music. Wang Lishan's "Dongshan Kuiyi Painting," Zhao Xiaosheng's "Echo in the Hollow Valley," Chen Yi's "Duoye" and other works broke through the form of Chinese traditional music creation, leading Chinese piano arrangements to a new stage, but also led the holding of various music awards and competitions (Yang, 2016 : 24-25).

For over half a century, Chinese composers have created many excellent piano works, of which the Chinese piano rearrangements with national characteristics are the most representative. Performers have constantly been exploring performance styles and innovating expression techniques, and committed to presenting Chinese culture and art to the world in a musical way. Their efforts have profoundly influenced the development of Chinese piano rearrangements.

## **Creation types of Chinese piano rearranged music**

### **Piano music adapted from folk songs**

For the adaptation of Chinese folk songs, the piano music is adapted using the piano harmony skill while maintaining the original national characteristics of the songs, thus creating a new form of performance of folk songs. It is also the most concentrated subject matter in the early years of the founding of China, among which there are "Peace March," "In the Far away," "Lan Huahua," and "Honghu Red Guards Fantasia" and other well-known piano rearrangement works. These works achieve the sublimation of the original features of the original music and the innovation of music techniques and enrich the performance of Chinese folk songs. It provides a diversified development path for changing Chinese folk music and piano music.

### **Piano music adapted from patriotic songs**

Because the creation of patriotic songs integrates the melodies of many nationalities and folk, the purpose of its creation is also to inspire and guide the patriotic feelings of the people through music, encourage people to pursue a new life, and brave against the illegal forces. Therefore, in the creation and innovation of musical techniques, musicians also pay great attention to the embodiment of humanistic feelings. On the one hand, through the innovation and application of skills to compare the situation of the old and new Chinese society. Sing the praises of the Communist Party led by the Chinese people to create a beautiful society, on the other hand, deepen the people's love for the Party and the country, and condense the feelings among people of all nationalities. During this period, classic red songs such as "The Kindness of the Communist Party can never be finished" and "Sing a Mountain Song to the Party" were widely sung.

### **Piano music adapted from folk music**

The multi-culture of 56 ethnic groups in China has also brought various materials for creating Chinese piano music. In addition to the performance characteristics of local Musical Instruments of all ethnic groups and the long history. The special mode of various ethnic scales based on Gong, Shang, Jiao, Hui, and Yu makes the piano music adapted from national

music quite representative of national culture. In the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese composers adapted the piano music of the same name based on the Classical Music of the Northern Wei Dynasty and the piano music of Early Summer Night adapted from the ancient pipa song "Dragonfly Water," which constantly explored and shaped the beauty of the artistic conception of Chinese national culture in the piano tone, providing a good template for the piano music adaptation of Chinese national music. Later piano rearrangement also began to imitate the pipa, huqin, zither, dizi, and other Musical Instrument's timbre for Chinese traditional music in the sonorous, soft, melodious effect are carried out unique innovation in the embodiment of the mood to give people with familiar and novel feelings.

### **Piano music adapted from follies**

In addition to songs and instruments, excellent music works in China come from performances of song and dance dramas. The music in song and dance dramas has a very strong atmosphere, which inspires the creation of Chinese piano adaptation. For example, in the music selection of the dance drama Fish Beauty, co-adapted by Wu Zuqiang and Du Mingxin, the two of them put their profound understanding of the characters in the drama into practice and sought creativity and inspiration through the dance material, which added a lot of vivid rhyme and rhythm beauty to the piano adaptation. This not only pushed the creation of piano rearrangement into a new situation but also brought new vitality to the creation of Chinese song and dance drama.

## **The general situation of Chinese folk song piano arrangement**

### **The concept of Chinese folk songs**

*Folk songs* are songs created and performed by working people in social practice. Like the cultures of all nations, they originate from human life and labor. They exist among people in the form of oral creation and oral transmission. It is the crystallization of the collective wisdom of the working people, and it is a treasure house for expressing thoughts and feelings connected with the working people's flesh and blood. Folk songs are the cornerstone of all musical art.

Folk songs have been cultivated on the soil of new China, like the wildflowers in the fields in spring, densely covered and swaying. The fertile fields of socialist folk song creation are displayed in front of us, and the singing of the working people rises into the sky and resounds through the sky. The Party and the government attached great importance to collecting and collating folk songs. They successively sent working groups to rescue and excavate the traditional folk culture, especially the folk customs, on a large scale. Since 1984, the work of compiling the Collection of Chinese Folk Songs has been carried out. Through these large-scale activities, the folk ballads spread in the collection and preservation to enrich and promote the excellent folk culture of the Chinese nation has made indelible contributions.

### **Overview of Chinese folk songs adapted for piano music**

Folk song adaptation refers to the piano music adapted by bold innovation, breakthrough, and adding new factors and colors based on retaining the song's original melody and style essence. It reflects a different aesthetic taste from folk tunes. Folk song rearrangement improves the singing technique of the original folk song, adds the dramatic effect, and plays a great role in promoting the development of national vocal music, which is the artistic value of folk song rearrangement. "It was Zhao Yuanren who first tried to play

Chinese piano music. In 1913, when he was studying in the United States, Zhao Yuanren adapted the traditional music 'Hua Ba Ban and Xiang Jiang Waves,' which was 500 years ago, into the wind organ music". 1921 issue "Music magazine" published Li Rongshou piano music "saw the VAT," he wrote in the title of the description: "Chinese drama in the small piece, very some spirit, if he translated out, with the three-chord method, with western music notation system into music, playing is also very interesting." The characteristics of their creation are: are the song melody and harmony accompaniment form, the melody is relatively short, the musical structure is very simple, and the vocal range is not wide, mainly to the traditional European harmony, no complex playing skills, and can play on the piano and organ. For example, in Zhao Yuanren's Peace March, the melody is based on the tones of Chinese folk songs, and the accompaniment is composed of traditional European functional harmonies. Li Rongshou's Saw VAT has only 14 bars. The right hand's melody is a Chinese folk tune, and the accompaniment of the left hand is also a very simple harmonic texture. Although these works were brief, they took the first step in integrating Chinese and Western piano music creation techniques, which laid the foundation for later composers to create piano music. Later, there appeared music for piano accompaniment for vocal music, such as: "The River Goes East", "Ask", "Selling Bu Ballad," "Homesickness," "Xiangjiang Wave", "How can I miss Him", and other songs piano accompaniment score (Mou, 2017 : 30-32).

In 1919, the "May Fourth" New Culture Movement promoted the formation and development of China's modern new music culture. Xiao Youmei, a music educator and composer who went to Japan to study and returned to China, presided over the establishment of three music education institutions under the support of Mr. CAI Yuanpei: "Music Department of Beijing Women's Higher Normal University" (1920), "Peking University Music Study Institute" (1922) and "Music Department of Beijing Art College" (1923). With vocal music, piano, traditional Chinese music, theoretical composition, and other majors. Meanwhile, in southern Shanghai, led by Li Shutong's students Feng Zikai, Wu Mengfei, and Liu Zhiping, the Music Department of Shanghai Normal College was established in 1920. In 1925, the private Music Department of Shanghai Fine Arts and the Music Department of Shanghai University of the Arts was also established. These are the earliest professional music education institutions in China.

In 1927, Xiao Youmei founded China's first independent music academy in Shanghai - the "National Conservatory of Music," which laid the foundation for developing Chinese piano art. The year 1934 should be the most important in the development of Chinese piano art. For the first time, he proposed "Chinese style" piano music. Chilpin promoted Chinese works and created a lot of piano music with a "Chinese flavor." It was because of the proposed works with "Chinese flavor" that the development of Chinese piano music pointed out the direction and laid a solid foundation for folk song rearrangement.

In 1937, with the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression outbreak, the development of new music culture in China during this period mainly focused on the creation of music works (mainly vocal music works) needed for the mass singing movement and the mass revolutionary struggle. However, for instrumental music (especially piano) art, due to the constraints of the social environment and various objective conditions, no matter in the creation, performance, education, and other aspects remained stagnant. In the spring of 1945, students from the Theory Composition Group of Chongqing Qingmuguan National Conservatory of Music, Grade 1947, published a wall newspaper named "Mountain Songs," which set off a boom of collecting, researching, and arranging folk songs accompaniment. On

March 31, 1946, the student association centered on arranging and singing established the "Folk Songs Club," and in June of the same year, under the name of "Shan Ge Club." Selected Chinese Folk Songs, which is the earliest collection of folk songs accompanied by piano in mainland China, is the crystallization of folk songs arranged by "Shan Ge Club" for more than two years.

The harmony practice and theory achievements of the "Mountain Song Society" and the articles in the wall newspaper of "Mountain Songs" provided valuable experience for exploring national harmony for later generations. Xie Gongcheng arranged the Southern Xinjiang folk song "I wait for you until the Dawn," Tu Xianruo arranged the Xinjiang folk song "Dawn Song," Chen Tianhe's Qinghai folk song "In that distant Place," Yan Liangsheng's Xinjiang folk song "The Coachman's Song," Pan Minghui arranged the Suiyuan folk song "The Wind Blows Every Day," Wu Yongyi arranged the Suiyuan folk song "The Path.

In the 1940s, composers used folk tunes as the material for experimental piano compositions. Qu Wei's "Flower Drum" adopts the Anhui folk song "Fengyang Flower Drum" as the first theme of joy, the rhythm of gongs and drums shows the festive and lively scene, and the music changes of "Jasmine Flower" as the second theme of tenderness. The song is natural and smooth, with a beautiful and cheerful folk melody, simple harmony, and piano texture. In 1947, Sang Tong's "In That Distant Place" boldly expanded and developed the original melody. Its harmony adopted the modern composition technique of atonality, which also had a different style than the original folk song—variations on the Theme of Chinese Folk Songs composed by Ding Shande in France in 1948. The theme melody is based on the Tibetan Xianzi Dance Music of Sichuan Province. It adopts the folk song theme variation technique, sometimes quiet and beautiful, sometimes elegant and elegant, sometimes lively and light, sometimes poetic and picturesque, and the color effect is very strong. In 1952, Lu Huabo wrote a Collection of Chinese Folk Songs for Piano. In the same year, Sang Tong wrote Seven Songs on the Theme of Inner Mongolian Folk Songs. Fifty Piano Songs of Folk Songs by Li Yinghai, Five Yunnan Folk Songs by Wang Jianzhong, 32 Miao Folk Songs by Sang Tong, Eight Short Folk Songs by Yang Ruhuai, Embroider Lotus Bag by Zhang Zhongxiang, Three Piano Songs of Sichuan Folk Songs by Ji Hua, Five Piano Songs of Sichuan Folk Songs by Huang Huwei were published (Zhang, 2018 : 23-29).

### **Principles for college students to play piano music adapted from Chinese folk songs**

#### **1. Improve the performance skills of college students**

Chinese piano works are slightly different from traditional Western techniques in playing techniques. Chinese music is generally in pentatonic mode, which is very different from Western music. These peculiarities make Chinese piano music have its unique style and flavor, which can give full play to its characteristics. In addition, most Chinese piano works are adapted from folk music, which contains many grace notes and special timbre. It also maximizes the innovation of piano repertoire based on inheritance. It not only retains the original national characteristics but also well reflects the infecting ability of piano works. Students should master these differences in playing and show the stylistic characteristics of national music. Through these different pieces with Chinese characteristics, more students can learn different playing skills and improve their playing skills and techniques (Zhang, 2015: 13-14).

#### **2. Improve students' music understanding ability.**

If only learning foreign piano works, it is not conducive for students to understand and appreciate the music itself because learning music is also learning the national culture

contained in the music. We are unfamiliar with foreign national cultures, need to be more friendly, and naturally have no interest in learning music. The introduction of Chinese piano works is different. Chinese piano works contain a strong Chinese national culture, which is the culture we have been exposed to. In this kind of culture, we do not have a sense of rejection, and the closer we get, the easier it is to understand and comprehend when we learn music. The better the understanding and analysis of Chinese piano works, the more beneficial it will improve students' ability to appreciate and analyze. Universities and teachers should reasonably arrange the appreciation of Chinese piano works in teaching and give students enough space to develop their appreciation ability (Tang, 2005 : 29-31).

### 3. It is conducive to promoting the development of music education

*Education* is a long-term, circular large-scale undertaking that is accumulated step by step. Only by cultivating excellent students can excellent teachers be produced, which will promote the development of music education in China in a circular way. Let China's piano career can be more than a little better, not reach the point of "youth." Today's situation is that many teachers need to learn more about Chinese national culture and expect to cultivate students' passion for folk music. From this aspect, teachers should focus more on learning and understanding the profound connotation of national culture and cultivate students' patriotism and folk music accomplishment (Liu, 1997 : 11-13).

### 4. The cultivation of national emotion

National emotion refers to an individual's advanced social-emotional experience, which is a positive evaluation of the country and nation to which the individual belongs, including patriotism, national pride, and pride. According to the social evaluation theory of emotion by Lazarus (1986), every emotion consists of physiological, behavioral, and cognitive components. Each plays a different role in each specific emotion, and the combinations of these three components constitute specific markers of specific emotional patterns. For the higher emotional experience of national emotion, the cognitive component plays a decisive role. In contrast, the individual psychological structure (attitude, belief, personality characteristics) plays a decisive role in the cognitive factors. Therefore, the cultivation of college students' national emotions is very important. The Chinese nation has a long history, and the Chinese people have strong national emotions. We are not only proud of the splendid cultural treasures and ideological wealth flashing in our long history but also proud of the diligence, unity, and wisdom of the Chinese people. However, in modern times, the Chinese people suffered from foreign invasions, which caused our nation to suffer great disasters. The strong national emotion of the Chinese people enabled our riddled nation to be reborn in the war. Since the founding of New China, the Chinese people have created enough achievements to make every Chinese people feel proud and proud (He, 2001 : 33-37).

## Conclusion

Quality education in colleges and universities includes ideological, political, scientific, humanistic, and artistic qualities. Art education is an important content of quality education for college students, especially in colleges and universities based on science and engineering. It is necessary to learn good professional knowledge and have a good comprehensive quality, which has more important practical significance for strengthening humanities and art quality education. As an art educator in the practice of art education for several years: I know how to do art education in colleges and universities well and how to play better the role of art education in cultivating high quality. Talents are the problem that art educators in colleges and universities

must think about and practice. The cultivation of self-confidence of college students in piano performance more effectively promote the harmonious and healthy development of college students' body and mind, promote the ideological exchange of college students, improve their character and temperament edify, improves the aesthetic quality and ideological and moral quality of college students, to cultivate their open thinking, and creative thinking has played an important role.

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