

# Discussions on the Performance Techniques of Pipa Song "Yunxiang Huaxiang"

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## ABSTRACT

"Yunxiang Huaxiang" is a piece of pipa work with distinctive classical characteristics. It is inspired by Li Bai's poem "Qing Ping Tiao". It borrows the image of Yang Yuhuan to depict the persistent pursuit of love by women in the Tang Dynasty. The performance skills of "Yunxiang Huaxiang" are also representative. Through the analysis of the music scores of the work, this article emphasizes the use of flipping and picking, tremolo and sweeping and whisking in performance, and puts forward the countermeasures of combining pipa music with the orchestra, keyboard, and traditional Chinese musical instruments to enhance the artistic quality of the work. The use of the three core techniques and their artistic expression can fully express the connotation and extension of the music.

**Keywords:** Pipa, "Yunxiang Huaxiang", Performance techniques, Performance artistry.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is a piece specially created by the famous composer of the Central Classical Orchestra, Ms. Wang Danhong, commissioned by the pipa performer of the Central Classical Orchestra, Ms. Zhao Cong. The creative inspiration of the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" comes from the famous sentence of "云想衣裳花想容，春风拂槛露华浓 (Clouds and peonies are reminiscent of the dress and face of Yang's respectively. Spring wind are caressing the balustrades and dews make flowers more beautifully)" in Li Bai's poem "Qing Ping Tiao". [16] In the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang", the composer Wang Danhong borrowed the image of Yang Yuhuan to express the feminine traits undisguisedly, depicting the persistent pursuit of love by women in the Tang Dynasty, praising her life that blooms like flowers. [4]

The pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" has a compact overall style and smooth melody, which highlights the theme of the work and also expresses the truest emotions of the author and performer. The performance skills of this work are also representative, especially the use of flipping and picking, tremolo and sweeping and whisking. [1]

## 2. FLIPPING AND PICKING

The flipping and picking technique of the pipa determines the overall sound effect, which is the lifeblood of the art of pipa. There are three types of flipping and picking hands: Longan, grommet, and Sizhu. Pipa's work "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is divided into several parts, each of which has a different theme and composition. The theme from the first part is chanting phrases. The players should keep the arm muscles loose and strong when playing. They should also extend the forearms and keep the back straight. And in the process of playing, they also need to pay attention to the liaison in the third bar of the music. In the third bar of the first part, there are two consecutive fast notes need to be played. Therefore, the performers must show a trend of getting faster when playing, so as not to appear abrupt, so that the audience can have a gradual sense of progress. At the same time, in the process of playing, it is necessary to keep the playing strength even. Even when playing fast notes, gradually increase your playing intensity. Only then can the rhythm be coherent and the melody fluent. [12] If the performer suddenly increases the intensity of his playing while playing, it will make the whole work appear inharmonious melody. At the same time, performers should also

pay attention to the coordination of expressions and movements, so that they can better integrate the emotion and the connotation of the work. [13] It can make people appreciate the main theme of the work more quietly, and at the same time better show the theme and connotation of the work. The first part of the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is mainly a vocal phrase, so the melody is softer. It adopts the method of subtle changes within the

fifth-degree range. [7] This delicate technique makes the melody of the first part of the music very beautiful. And it is suitable for the technique of pipa, presenting a whispering effect to the audience. Therefore, many audiences praised the melody of the first part, and the effect of this kind of talk made the narrative of pipa work more comprehensive. [3] ("Figure 1")



Figure 1 Example 1 of pipa work "Yunxiang Huaxiang".

### 3. TREMOLO

Another characteristic of the melody played in the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is the continuous tacit coordination of fingers when using the skill of tremolo. The pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" has both a cheerful, lively and fast playing part. There is also a melodious, affectionate slow playing part. [11] This requires the tacit cooperation of the player's different fingers, and the exact sequence of playing, in order to better grasp the rhythm of the pipa playing and make the rhythm of the pipa playing more clear and dexterous. In the pipa song [14] "Yunxiang Huaxiang", there are many excerpts that require the pipa player to play the melody with the right hand while moving the pipa code with the left hand to change the pitch. This has higher requirements for the player, and puts forward a

higher performance standard for the flexibility and responsiveness of the player's fingers. If pipa fans want to perform this song better, they must diligently practice the sequence of fingering in the process of daily playing, in order to better perform the whole song. In the second part of "Yunxiang Huaxiang", the song writer uses a faster rhythm. What the writer wants to reflect is a state of richness and broadness. This type of rhythm is repeated after broadening the range. The main purpose of this part of the melody is to express the vast land and resources of the Tang Dynasty, and the open and tolerant humanistic history. Compared with the light plastic effect of the first part, the second part presents a more coarse melody. In sharp contrast with the first part, the theme of the whole piece of music has been further sublimated. [8] ("Figure 2")



Figure 2 Example 2 of pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang".

### 4. SWEEPING AND WHISKING

The main technical feature of the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is that the high and low ranges of the melody change accurately when sweeping and whisking. The pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" also has a solo version. The solo version is different from the concerto. It

requires the performer to have strong pipa playing skills and professionalism. And in the creation of this song, the creator's melody also has a certain distinction between the high and low ranges. Therefore, the performer must use the technique of sweeping and whisking to make the high-low range transition of the melody accurately, so as to better highlight the theme of the pipa performance. At the

same time, it also cooperates with the structure of pipa performance to make the whole work more complete and smoother. The author of the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" uses a motivational and instrumental melody. The performance of special sound effects is the most difficult part of this passage. When playing special sound effects, the player needs to lightly cover the left hand in the bass area, and quickly use the right hand to sweep the strings. This action should pay attention to explosive power, concentration, and the simultaneity of the left and right hands. At the same time, the whole sweeping state requires control. The little finger's playing skills are emphasized, that is, the little finger must be drawn between the

fingers when playing, the wrist must have a certain degree of control, and it must be driven by the forearm. [6] At the same time, she also pointed out that the key to playing this part is to focus on the multi-voice dialogue, and the forearm plays an important role in concentrated and explosive performance. In the third part of "Yunxiang Huaxiang", the song writer draws on the realization methods of folk music. She uses a fixed triplet rhythm pattern for the narration of the second theme. The high part has only four simple notes, but through different permutations and combinations, the melody of the high part is powerful. [17] ("Figure 3")

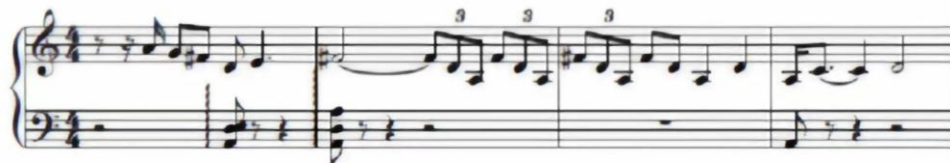


Figure 3 Example 3 of Pipa's "Yunxiang Huaxiang".

## 5. COUNTERMEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE OF "YUNXIANG HUAXIANG"

The pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" has a very innovative style, and the historical emotion and literary and artistic style in the work are also very strong. Its pipa creation style has very rich artistic value. While taking into account the performance skills in the performance, people can also improve the artistry of the performance from the following aspects. [9]

### 5.1 Working Closely with Orchestral Instruments

Another way to improve the artistry of the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is that it can use some representative musical instrument accompaniment and work closely with orchestral instruments. The combination of this creative style and innovative techniques has allowed the creation of this pipa song to achieve a high level of success. The work was originally a solo piece, but during the performance of the work, the choreographer also added several orchestral instruments as the accompaniment to its pipa performance, such as flute, trumpet, etc. The choreographer also referred to the artistic style of the Tang Dynasty when

arranging the rhythm of orchestral instruments. The use of a strong art form better highlights the theme of the pipa performance and better expresses the player's inner feelings. When incorporating the piano as an instrument, the choreographer also highlighted the main instrument, the pipa. Players must grasp this feature and work closely with orchestral instruments. This is another way to enhance the artistic quality of pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang", and it is also another pipa creation style.

### 5.2 Working Closely with Keyboard Instruments

Another way to improve the artistry of the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is to cooperate with keyboard instruments, such as piano. When incorporating the piano as an instrument, the choreographer also highlighted the main instrument, the pipa. The piano is just an auxiliary instrument for the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang". Its addition not only does not overwhelming the audience, but also better brings out the timbre of the pipa. Players must grasp this feature and work closely with orchestral instruments to better highlight the creative style of the piece. The piano accompaniment can also bring out the mood of the work more vividly. At the same time, the theme of pipa performance is very prominent. The theme of

the pipa performance of the pipa piece "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is the mutual love between Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Concubine Yang. They admired each other in life, and Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty also built Huaqing Pool for Concubine Yang, and in order for Concubine Yang to taste fresh lychees, he did not hesitate to ask his ministers to rush to transport the lychees. These plots also moved the audience. Although this piece is just a piece of music, the pipa player has neither the lyrics nor the plot of the specific performance, through the melody of the music and the change of the melody of the music, the audience is more than enough to feel the theme of this joy. When the performer played this section of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Concubine Yang admiring each other, it even more drove the audience's inner emotions. The audience in the audience seemed to be as excited and happy as Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Concubine Yang. These all bring the theme of pipa performance of the pipa song [5] "Yunxiang Huaxiang" to the audience. Even after listening to the performance of the work, many audiences still have a lot of discussions about the melody and theme of the work. Some lay audiences who are not familiar with pipa performance can also experience this joyful theme of pipa performance. They have repeatedly requested that this song can be added for multiple performances, hoping to enjoy this beautiful song again, which is also another way to improve the artistry of the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang". Players must grasp this feature and work closely with keyboard instruments to better highlight the creative style of the song.

### ***5.3 Making Close Cooperation with Traditional Chinese Musical Instruments***

The most important measure to improve the artistic quality of the pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is to work closely with traditional musical instruments, such as guzheng and erhu. The pipa is also a very ancient Chinese traditional musical instrument. Whether it is used with guzheng as an accompaniment instrument, or ensemble with the erhu, the literary and artistic style of the work can be obvious. It is that when the traditional Chinese musical instruments are closely matched, they can learn from each other's strengths, make full use of their advantages, and innovate and strengthen the performance techniques of the work. Through the name of this pipa song, people can see

a very strong feeling of tracing history. It also highlights its unique literary and artistic style. Speaking of "Cloud Thinking Flower Thinking", we will naturally think of the famous verse of Li Bai, a poet in the Tang Dynasty: "Clouds and peonies are reminiscent of the dress and face of Yang's respectively". The Tang Dynasty was an open and tolerant dynasty, and the love between Emperor Xuanzong of Tang Dynasty and Concubine Yang was also free and generous, which became a good story. This also makes the tone of the whole piece very cheerful and makes the audience's heart young and happy. These are all due to the obvious literary and artistic style of the work. And during the performance of this piece, many viewers even can't help but swing and shake with the music. When the pipa was played, the audience seemed to feel that they were the protagonist of the music, wandering freely and joyfully in the beautiful historical landscape of the prosperous Tang Dynasty. [10]

## **6. CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, we can find that: pipa song "Yunxiang Huaxiang" is a combination of innovation and classical style, with strong artistic characteristics. The whole piece of music has a certain sense of innovation whether it is in the pipa performance structure or performance technique: it is not only full of lyrical performance in pipa performance, but also a certain degree of artistic tolerance. The integration of literary and artistic elements is the icing on the cake. Among them, flipping and picking, tremolo, and sweeping and whisking are the three core techniques of the work. Only by mastering the three techniques while taking into account its artistic expression can the connotation and extension of the music be more fully expressed. [15]

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

This paper is independently completed by Dongqing Liu.

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