

Exploring the Performance Method of Zhang Zhao's "Ballad" for Piano

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ABSTRACT

Zhang Zhao's piano piece "Ballad" is adapted from the Ballad piece of the same name "Wang Erxiao" by poet Fang Bing and famous Chinese composer Li Jiefu. This paper focuses on the background of the work and a brief analysis of the work, the artistic characteristics of characterization and storytelling, and the analysis of the performance method of characterization and artistic characteristics of storytelling, in order to provide some theoretical basis for the performers and hopefully to provide some help to them.

Keywords: Zhang Zhao, Ballad piece, Chinese work, performance method.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Composition Background

Zhang Zhao, born in Yunnan Province, China, is a famous contemporary composer and pianist, a professor at the Conservatory of Music of the Central University for Nationalities, a member of the Chinese Musicians Association and a master's tutor. Zhang Zhao studied at the Central Academy of Nationalities in 1984 and graduated from the composition department of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1988. He has been involved in music composition and composed works in a wide variety of genres, including folk instrumental music, symphonic music, piano compositions, chamber music, musicals, dance dramas, film and television music, songs and large-scale square art music, such as "Lamentation Rhapsody", "Ganwu Aniu", "Chinese Melody", "Children's World", "Expectation" and so on. In May 2013, Li Qing, daughter of Li Zhaofu, met Zhang Zhao at

the Juyong Academy in Badaling, where Zhang Zhao performed his piano piece "Pi Huang" and "Mei Niang Song" in honor of Nie Er's 100th anniversary. The song "Mei Niang Song" was written to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Nie Er. After listening to the piece, Li Qing was touched on the spot and invited Zhang Zhao to compose an adaptation for the 100th anniversary of Li's birth. This piece is also one of his masterpieces for piano and was selected as one of the "Chinese Solo Piano Works for 100 Years".

1.2 Brief Analysis of the Work

The piano work "Ballad" is a complex three-part structure with variations and reproduction, with 277 bars. It is based on the single melody of the original song, and then the main melody is derived and developed to form a huge unfolding section, which is progressively shifted in tune, and the sound becomes more and more grand towards the climax and finally returns to peace. The structure of the work is shown in the example Picture 1.

Construction	A			B		A'	
	A	B	C	D	A'	Coda	
Section number	1-16	17-32	33-185	186-247	248-268	269-277	
Mode tonality	C yu	C yu	bE-C gong-G gong	E gong-D gong-A yu -#C yu	C yu	C gong	

Picture 1 : Musical form analysis

The first part, sections A and B, both use the same melody to match the tune of the vocal song "Wang Erxiao". "The A section is divided into three parts, while the B section, with the addition of the accompaniment pattern, returns to calm after the sound thickens, foreshadowing the conflicts that occur afterwards. The middle section, which accounts for the largest part of 214 bars, is divided into sections C and D. The climax of the work is also this section, which focuses on the development of the story. section D is a pseudo-recapitulation passage, with the tonal modulation moving from E court to D, then to A to # C. Then, it shifts back to the original tune, back to C feather modulation, and then enters the true recapitulation passage of the piece, which has essentially the same melody as the opening theme and eventually evolves into the coda of the piece. The final coda modulation subtly shifts to C-flat, and the mood changes from melancholy to light, symbolizing hope."

The author divides the whole work into 5 parts and 1 coda according to the expression of feelings. The first part (1-32), played at a broad tempo with lighter intensity, depicts Wang Erxiao herding cattle in an open field; the second part (32-102), played at an allegro tempo, is a connecting section with dissonant harmonic progressions, showing the scene in which Wang Erxiao meets and circles the Japanese; the middle part of the third part (103-185), played at a predominantly sharp and fast tempo, shows two The fourth part (186-247) is played at the tempo of the line, with a tragic and subdued chord, and the fifth part (248-268) is also a recapitulation of the introduction, played at the tempo of the broad board, with the recapitulation of the theme melody, the story gradually comes to an end, and finally the coda (269-277) is soft and gentle, pushing the music gradually to the distance.

2. THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BALLAD SONG

2.1. Artistic Features with Distinctive Characters

2.1.1. The Source of the Story

"This piece is a vocal adaptation of a piano work, the theme of which comes from the Ballad song of the same name "Singing Two Little Cattlemen" composed by Fang Bing and Li Jiefu, and the author traced the story behind it by checking the literature in the article "Thirty-six Gunshots". "The story is about a young boy, Wang Erxiao, who, while herding cattle on a hillside one day during the war against Japan, encountered the Japanese who were about to sweep the ravine. He lured the Japanese into the army's ambush circle, despite the danger to his own life, in order to protect the villagers and the army's ambush organs in the rear. The Japanese, who were not aware of the ambush until later, were so angry that they brutally murdered Wang Erxiao. In the end, the Japanese army was wiped out, and Wang Erxiao died heroically to protect the villagers and the army. The rescued villagers and the army sang hymns and mourned the little hero after hearing Wang Erxiao's heroic deeds.

2.1.2. Characteristic Features

According to the source of the story, the author analyzes that in this piece, Zhang Zhao portrays three distinct characters, mainly around the "little hero" Wang Erxiao and the "devil" Japanese, the conflict between the two opposing characters, and the final end of the conflict. The characterization of the "brave" Chinese soldier who ended the war conflict.

2.1.2.1. The "Innocent" Wang Erxiao

In the above story, Wang Erxiao bravely lured the Japanese into the ambush circle of the Eighth Route Army in order to protect the villagers and the ambush organs behind the Eighth Route Army, and was finally killed. Therefore, he was a "little hero" in the revolutionary era, but he was also an ordinary cowherd boy, so the composer used a peaceful and beautiful theme

melody when portraying this character. The image of the innocent and innocent.

2.1.2.2. The "Vicious" Japanese

In this story, the Japanese killed the innocent cowherd boy Wang Erxiao, so they are fierce and terrible. In order to portray the fierce and terrible image of the Japanese, the composer uses a lot of dissonant fifth chords in the right hand to express the fierce image of the Japanese, and a very tense harmonic progression in the left hand with a sustained bass to create a horrible atmosphere.

2.1.2.3. The "Brave" Chinese Soldiers

The Chinese soldiers are very brave and fearless in this story as they are not afraid of difficulties and fight in blood to defeat the Japanese in the end. Therefore, when the composer portrayed the brave and fearless image of the Chinese army, he used melodic tones in the left hand to imitate the sound of the army's trumpet, and the right hand mixed some tragic and vocal intervals to make the background.

2.2. Artistic Characteristics of "Storytelling"

2.2.1. What is "Storytelling"?

"Storytelling generally consists of a three-part sequence, divided into a beginning, a middle and an end." The beginning of the story is the beginning of the story, in which the main characters and the idea of the story are introduced to the reader, corresponding to the first part of the score (1-32) and the second part (32-102), which takes up about 1/4 of the whole story and ends with the first small climax; the middle part is used for the narration, describing the main conflicts, in the third part (103-194), the fourth part (186- 247) and the fifth part (248-247). 247) and the fifth part (248-268), in response to difficulties and the main character's choice to fight against conflicts and difficulties; the middle part has two mini-climaxes, the first one occurring in the fourth part (186-247), as well as the second one occurring at the end of the middle part, which corresponds to the fifth part (248-268) in the score; the ending part is also the concluding part of the story. Therefore, it corresponds to the coda (269-277) in the piece. Since "storytelling" is rather abstract, the "storytelling" in this Ballad piece of Zhang Zhao needs to be integrated with its story text.

2.2.2. The Twist of the Storyline

Based on the above, the author roughly summarizes this piece into the following six twists and turns. The first twist is that Wang Erxiao suddenly encounters the Japanese when herding cattle (32-33); the second twist is that Wang Erxiao and the Japanese circle around until he is introduced into the ambush circle of Chinese soldiers

(102-103); the third twist is that the Chinese soldiers suddenly attack and fight with the Japanese (147-148); the fourth twist is that the Japanese learn that they have been ambushed and brutally kill Wang Erxiao (185-186); the fifth twist is that the Japanese learn that they have been ambushed and kill Wang Erxiao (185-187); and the fifth twist is that the Japanese learn that they have been ambushed and brutally kill him. (186); the fifth turning point is that the Chinese soldiers have achieved the final victory, but Wang Erxiao has died a heroic death, and everyone has mourned for him (207-208); the sixth turning point is back to the opening scene of Wang Erxiao herding cattle, but the cattle doll is no longer there (247-248). Due to the limited word count in this paper, the following author will focus on the analysis from the first turning point and the fifth turning point, which are two turning points.

2.2.2.1. The First Turning Point

The first is the turn from the opening introductory part to the second part, describing the storyline in which Wang Erxiao suddenly encounters the evil Japanese on his way to herd cattle. The tempo of the performance changes from line to allegro; the melody changes from languid and soft to tense and ominous; the intensity changes from weak to strong, paving the way for the stormy battle that follows.

2.2.2.2. The Fifth Turning Point

This is the fifth part of the storyline, in which the Chinese soldiers return in triumph but Wang Er Xiao has been brutally killed by the enemy. The tempo of the performance changes from fast to soft; the melody changes from fierce and high to generous and mournful; the intensity becomes stronger and stronger, and the emotion changes from the anger of the battle to sorrow and anger.

3. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE METHODS

3.1 Performance Methods of Different Images

According to the above analysis, I think there are three different characters in the repertoire, and the following author will give the corresponding performance methods according to the different characters.

3.1.1. Wang Erxiao

3.1.1.1. Playing Method

First of all, the whole piece of music expresses a peaceful and idyllic mood. The tempo is Largo with a wide board and the score is marked P, so the whole

section should not be played too fast or too strong. In order to highlight the melodic part of the right hand, the fingers of the right hand need to touch the keys high and slow, deep in the keys, so that the tone is full and heavy, and the intensity of the performance is a little weaker; the accompaniment of the left hand needs to be played weakly, with the fingers against the keys, highlighting the melody of the right hand theme.

3.1.1.2. The Use of Pedals

This piece of music is based on a peaceful and beautiful theme melody. Although the pedal is not marked on the score, the author believes that in order to better connect the melody, the performer needs to use the sustain pedal to connect the melody, and the sustain pedal needs to be changed once per measure according to the phrase, so as to achieve a smooth acoustic effect and make the melody more coherent.

3.1.2. Japanese

3.1.2.1. Playing Method

The whole piece of music shows a scary and nervous image. The tempo is fast, and the composer marks the intensity in this music from weak slowly tapering and finally tapering again, so the mood of the whole performance should be tense and frightening, and the tempo is slightly faster. In order to perform the discordant intervals in the right hand, the player should slow down the keys and push the fingertips forward to add a harmonic color to the discordant intervals; the left hand is divided into two parts, the discordant interval progression and the sustained bass, the player needs to highlight the discordant interval progression, the sustained bass is a little weaker, and the intensity of the whole section makes a big fluctuation according to the score. The whole section has a big rise and fall in intensity according to the notation, so that the music is more layered.

3.1.2.2. The Use of Pedals

This piece of music is dominated by a horrible and tense atmosphere. Although the pedal is not marked on the score, the author believes that in order to increase the tonal effect and harmonic color, and to perpetuate the discordant harmonic color, it is necessary to use a long sustain pedal. The sustain pedal follows the rise and fall of the music and the division of the phrase to change the pedal every four bars, so as to highlight the musical color of the discordant harmony.

3.1.3. Chinese Soldiers

3.1.3.1. Playing Method

The whole section of music depicts a righteous and tall image. The tempo is fast and the composer has marked this section as strong, so the mood of the whole section should be high and courageous. In the right-hand triplet pattern, the player should play the triplet pattern with one note in each triplet pattern, and the left-hand melodic tone, which imitates the sound of military trumpet, should be played with the fingertips.

3.1.3.2. The Use of Pedals

This piece of music is dominated by a rousing mood. Although the pedal is not marked on the score, I believe that in order to effectively enhance the volume of the piano and the full and exciting mood of the phrase, the player needs to change the sustain pedal every two bars following the phrase, so that the melody of the left hand becomes coherent and exciting, and the accompaniment of the right hand is very clear, avoiding the muddy music.

3.2. Expression of the "Storytelling" Character

In order to make the player play better, the analysis of the second chapter focuses on two transitions as follows.

3.2.1. The First Turning Point

3.2.1.1. Tempo Change

In this storyline, the tempo changes from Allegro to Allegro, and the speed of the transition is larger. The speed before the turn is 2/4 beats per bar 48 for one beat, after the turn the speed is 2/4 beats per bar 168 for one beat; the player needs to do a gradual slow rit in the last part of the previous section before the turn to prepare for the speed change later. After the turn, because the speed is faster, we need to practice more slowly, memorize the rhythm, and play with a relaxed body, leaning forward slightly, and playing accurately against the keys.

3.2.1.2. Strength Shift

In this storyline transition, there is a clear contrast between strength and weakness. The overall volume before the turn is *p*; after the turn is *f*. In the performance, the performer needs to present the contrast between the strength and weakness of the two storyline turns, the overall volume before the turn needs to be played weaker, the right hand melody is deep but light, the left hand accompaniment and harmony must be weak, the palm joints buffer the power and stick to the key, slow down the key; after the turn, in order to form a stronger contrast with before the turn, the overall volume needs to be played After the turn, in order to create a stronger contrast with the pre-turn, the overall volume needs to be

accentuated by the *f*. The fingertips of the left and right hands need to hook the keys, play the keys quickly, lean forward slightly, and send the power of the whole arm to the fingertips.

3.2.2. The Fifth Turning Point

3.2.2.1. Tempo Change

In this storyline transition, the tempo changes from *line* to *soft*. Although the tempo change is not significant. However, the player needs to make an emotional change, and the inner emotion changes from *passionate* to *mournful*. The tempo before the turn is *Andante*, the last bar before the turn is a gradual slowing down, after the turn the tempo is *Adagio*, 2/4 beats per bar, each beat is 66, the melody changes to octave and the octave is played with relaxed arms and wrists, highlighting the high notes of the melody, the melody of the flower is a long jump, it should be played in time, accurately, deftly and clearly. .

3.2.2.2. Strength Shift

In this storyline transition, the intensity becomes stronger and stronger until *ff*. Before the transition, the intensity of the downward octave chords of the left and right hands needs to have a progression, and the player needs to arrange the change of the delicate crescendo color in order to increase the magnificent playing effect; after the transition, the player needs to use the power of the big arms and the whole body of the left and right hands to make the tone mood more full and powerful.

4. CONCLUSION

Zhang Zhao's "Ballad" is a famous piano work in the category of vocal adaptation. The composer boldly tried to use the text of a Chinese revolutionary story as the theme Ballad, and through the analysis of this work, the author summarized the way Zhang Zhao portrayed the characters in this work and the way he performed the different story scenes in the work, hoping that this paper can help you better understand and perform this Chinese piano work.

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