A Dialogue across Time and Space: Western Classical Quotations in Jay Chou's *Piano Injury*

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Abstract. This article aims to analyze the quotations of classical music compositions in Jay Chou's song Piano Injury and its significance for the development of Chinese popular music. The fusion of pop music with Western classical music is a meaningful research topic. Through the adaptation of Western traditional music, it is harmoniously combined with pop music and together they create a scene full of love and regret. But the research on this topic in the field of Chinese popular music studies are rare. Therefore, this article selects Piano Injury, a representative song that can well embody the spirit of innovation. This song is selected from Jay Chou's album "Exclamation Mark", and it well demonstrates the possibility of combining two musical styles. The Western classical music quoted in this song, Tchaikovsky's June: Barcarolle and Mozart's Turkish March, also have some representativeness in Western classical music. It is hoped that the analysis of this song will provide ideas for subsequent scholars.

Keywords: Jay Chou, Chinese popular music, Western classical music, Music quotation.

1 Introduction

In the diverse landscape of contemporary music development, the influence of Western classical music on popular music is becoming increasingly significant. With the advancement of music creation technology and the diversification of listeners' aesthetic demands, more and more popular music works have begun to incorporate elements of classical music. This cross-genre fusion not only enriches the expressive forms of popular music but also provides new channels for the modern dissemination of classical music. There are more and more genres available for us to choose from. Among them, Western classical music has greatly inspired popular music. Traces of Western classical music can be found in many popular music genres, and even many popular music genres use these Western classical music for sampling. Jay Chou, as a representative figure in the Chinese music scene, has always been renowned for the innovation and diverse integration of his works. This article uses references to Western classical music from Jay Chou's *Piano Injury* for research, aiming to analyze whether two musical styles can blend harmoniously under different harmonic systems and how they blend. This paper mainly examines the references in *Piano Injury* to Tchaikovsky's *June: Barcarolle* and

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Mozart's *Turkish March*, and explores the connection between Western classical music and popular music and the significance of this song for the innovation of popular music by presenting the composition background and reference techniques of *Piano Injury*, *June: Barcarolle* and *Turkish March*.

2 The Composition of the *Piano Injury*

Piano Injury is a song from Jay Chou's 2011 album "Exclamation Mark". Composed by Jay Chou and with lyrics by Vincent Fang, the song blends elements of classical music with pop music style, showcasing Jay's diversity and innovation in musical composition. This song, with its unique musical style and profound emotional expression, has become a model work in Jay Chou's music career that integrates classical and pop elements. Jay Chou's musical works are highly integrated and not exclusive, with very diverse elements [1]. Although the pursuit of artistic quality in the creation of pop music and Western classical music is different, mutual reference between them is essential. For the creation of pop music, some artists have taken the form of Western classical music as an important reference, which often leads to special artistic effects [2]. The melody of the piano is clear and infectious. Combined with Jay Chou's signature pop singing style, it achieves a perfect balance between the strict structure of classical music and the improvisational freedom of pop music. Moreover, the arrangement incorporates string instruments and electronic sound effects, further enriching the musical texture. This diversified instrumentation approach not only retains the refinement of classical music but also endows the work with a distinct modern feel. Jay Chou's combination of classical melodies with modern pop music, using the piano as the leading instrument to create a unique musical atmosphere, is also a cross-border innovation between Western classical music and modern pop music. The melodies in the adapted works are more melodious and have the expressive significance of classical music [3]. This cross-genre fusion is not merely a simple collage, but rather achieves a harmonious blend through re-arrangement, harmonic adaptation and rhythm adjustment, allowing the natural flow of classical music to complement the dynamic vitality of pop music. For instance, a certain piano solo in the song retains the lyrical quality of classical music while, through changes in rhythm and tone color processing, it becomes more in line with the aesthetic preferences of modern audiences. This approach not only rejuvenates classical music but also opens up new possibilities for pop music composition.

2.1 Lyrics

The song tells the story of the protagonist watching his beloved girl put on her wedding ring with someone else, the unforgettable love story that once came to nothing, and the sad love story of two lovers who were apart in the end. The lyrics repeatedly mention "the sound of the piano" and "memories", symbolizing a lost relationship, as if searching for the shadow of the past in the sound of the piano. The song is filled with a faint sense of sadness and nostalgia.

Fong Wen Shan's lyrics, in line with his usual artistic style, vividly depict the regrets and sadness in love through delicate words, adding a great sense of imagery to the song. The delicate brushstrokes allow all listeners to resonate with this love story filled with both sad and beautiful memories. Like "Your backlit outline, like a silhouette, full of imagination, anyone would fall in love with it." "I am reluctant to ask who is waiting for you to shore, a ring mark on your finger, watching you go further and further away in sadness" "The waves reflect the time, the blue ocean, but in your heart there is an opaque place". In terms of content creation, the verses mainly describe scenes, tasks and some specific plots, while the choruses mainly express their own emotions to create a realistic visual effect [4]. These lyrics describe the story of the male and female protagonists in this love story in the most concise language, with a beautiful style.

2.2 Visual Presentation

The music video of *Piano Injury* uses its unique visual language and film-level production standards to give a concrete expression to the emotional connotation of the song. This MV, which was personally involved in the creative design by Jay Chou, not only continues his consistent fantasy aesthetic style but also transforms the collision of classical and popular music in the song into a visual feast that transcends time and space through exquisite scene construction and metaphorical narrative. The music video for *Piano Injury* features Jay Chou as the perfumer and Liang Xinyi as the classical beauty respectively. The perfumer, Jay Chou, plays with a "boat in a bottle" shaped perfume. After smelling the mysterious scent, he enters the time and space inside the perfume bottle and meets Lara playing the piano inside the boat. They are attracted to each other and dance sweely together. But every time the scent fades away, Jay Chou has to rush back to his room, sit in the seat where time interweaves, and return to real life. Every time he had to meet Lara again, Jay would open the perfume bottle and enter the "ship in the bottle" to reunite with Lara, but the perfume would eventually run out, and the perfumer would have to create a perfume with the same scent to meet Lara. The entire music video, from building the ship, setting up the art, shooting to post-production, was made to the same standards as the movie. It took two months just for 3D post-production to create the scene of the ancient ship sailing on the sea. The music video of the song is not only a visual complement to the music but also an independent multimedia art piece. It demonstrates that when music, images and metaphors are deeply integrated, pop culture products can also carry profound artistic expressions. This exploration has also set a benchmark for the subsequent creation of Chinese music videos - the balance between technical precision and philosophical thinking is the key to touching modern audiences.

3 The Quotation of Tchaikovsky's *June: Barcarolle*

In this song, Tchaikovsky's *June: Barcarolle* runs through almost the entire piece. The rhythm and arrangement of modern pop music show Jay Chou's tribute and innovation to classical music. Jay Chou drew on the melody of *June: Barcarolle*, but reorganized

the rhythm to make *Piano Injury* more varied in rhythm within the regular beats and more in the style of pop music. In the chorus section (0:38), Jay Chou directly replaced the main melody of *June: Barcarolle* with a human voice, which is an ingenious arrangement that better reflects the fusion of Western classical music and pop music. In some pop songs, the piano's timbre is distorted and expanded through electronic effects [5]. At that time, Tchaikovsky signed a contract with a well-known local magazine to create works that were in line with the local customs and nature of Russia according to the composition requirements of the partner, one piece per month [6]. The *June: Barcarolle* was composed in accordance with the theme of June. The poem provided Tchaikovsky with the inspiration to create a quiet and leisurely musical atmosphere. In June of Russian summer, the weather is pleasant, and the white night phenomenon makes the night poetic as well. In some of Russia's rivers and lakes, people would go boating at this time. This unique natural landscape and living scene provided Tchaikovsky with abundant creative inspiration, prompting him to depict the romance and tranquility of June through music. Firstly, the theme of this song is in line with *Piano Injury*. *Piano Injury* depicts a love story full of regrets on a boat, while *June: Barcarolle* is also based on the scene of boating on a poetic river or lake in June in Russia. Secondly, the musical atmosphere presented in *June: Barcarolle* is in line with the central idea of *Piano Injury*. *June: Barcarolle* is in g sharp minor, a minor mode that itself has a soft, dim hue and is prone to evoke sad emotions. The melodic lines rise and fall rather smoothly, with steps and small leaps being the main ones. The notes are smooth and soothing, as if people are sighing softly, like the downward notes in the theme melody, giving a sense of melancholy and sadness. Despite the rap singing style in the verse, it is quite clear that *Piano Injury* is not a piece of music with a cheerful mood. The Rap form is more like a narrative of a love story with a sad atmosphere. Pop music is generally better known for forming a sense of identity than classical music [7]. The emotional atmosphere expressed by these two pieces of music is the same.

4 The Quotation of Mozart's *Turkish March*

The interlude section of the chorus of *Piano Injury* (1:06) quotes music from Mozart's *Turkish March*. This adaptation builds on the original *Turkish March*, a development that is different from the strict rhythmic patterns of classical music. The development of the theme is also a key point of the songwriting technique. There are many ways to develop a musical theme, such as repetition, extension, contraction, expansion, variation, etc. Different applications of these methods produce different musical effects and express a variety of emotions [8]. I think Jay Chou's adaptation of *Turkish March* has a romantic touch to some extent, which happens to echo the romantic work *June: Barcarolle* and won't cause the song to have a dissonant auditory experience.

Turkish March is the third movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in A Major (K.331), composed in 1783. At that time, "Turkish fever" was prevailing in Europe, and elements of Turkish culture, music, clothing, etc. were widely popular there. Influenced by this cultural trend, Mozart incorporated Turkic musical elements into his compositions to cater to the prevailing social customs and the preferences of his audience. Especially

before creating this piece, Mozart formed deep friendships with musicians such as Weber. By drawing on the artistic ideas and creative techniques of these musical masters, he developed a more profound understanding of music in his youth, and thus developed a more distinctive musical composition idea [9]. Mozart explored and innovated throughout his musical career, experimenting with a variety of musical styles and forms. Having been exposed to the music of many different ethnic groups and regions, he had a keen sense and unique ability to blend various musical elements. Mozart's " exoticisms " have their own value of reality and are thus far more than just philological quotations or curious excursions into foreign domains[10]. The Turkish March is the result of his exploration, demonstrating his creative ability to combine exotic styles with his own musical talent, incorporating unique elements such as fast rhythms and rich embellishments into the work. It has developed a distinct Turkish style. *Piano injury* has a unique combination of Western classical music and pop music, and to some extent it is as innovative as the stylistic fusion of *Turkish March* in its time.

5 Conclusion

Jay Chou's *Piano Injury*, which has been widely praised by music fans, demonstrates his Jay Chou's *Piano Injury*, which has been widely praised by music fans, demonstrates his profound classical music skills and unique musical talent, and also shows the possibility of combining pop music with Western classical music. It has injected new artistic vitality into the Chinese music scene. By drawing inspiration from Tchaikovsky's *June: Barcarolle* and Mozart's *Turkish March*, Jay Chou has ingeniously combined classical and pop music and created a new atmosphere. This mood, accompanied by highly visual lyrics, makes it possible for listeners who are not in the music industry and find Western classical music abstruse to understand its profound meaning. This creative approach not only breaks the boundaries between classical music and popular music, but also rejuvenates classical music in a way that is more accessible to modern audiences. The artistic value of the song's references to classical music also lies in a dialogue that transcends time and space. A scene of lovers parting sorrowfully on a ship gives a more concrete expression to *June: Barcarolle* and *Turkish March*, which originally had no lyrics. The artistic value of the song is not only reflected in the innovation of musical form, but also in its realization of a dialogue transcending time and space. Jay Chou, through his reinterpretation of classical masterpieces, engages in a "musical conversation" spanning over a century with musical masters such as Tchaikovsky and Mozart. This dialogue is both a tribute to classical music and an expansion of the possibilities of pop music. The interweaving of classical and modern elements in the song creates an auditory experience that is both familiar and novel for the listeners, satisfying their nostalgia while also bringing a sense of novelty. The development of music has always been inseparable from the accumulation and continuous exploration of predecessors. The theories and practices established by these predecessors provided a solid foundation and creative space for later musicians to create. We can clearly perceive the wonderful link between modern pop music and Western classical music in Jay Chou's

Piano Injury, which has some significance for the innovation of pop music. The wonderful connection between modern pop music and Western classical music in the song not only opens up new directions for the creation of pop music, but also provides new channels for the dissemination of classical music. On the road ahead, the combination of pop music and classical music still awaits further exploration and development, seeking more possibilities for the combination of the two to bring listeners more new auditory experiences and different insights. Musicians can further explore the possibility of integrating the two, for instance, by attempting to incorporate more classical works from different periods and styles into pop music creation, or by endowing classical music with brand-new forms of expression through modern technological means such as electronic music and virtual reality.

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