

# The Three Beams of "Moonlight" through the Time and Space

A Discussion about Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", Debussy's "Moonlight" and Chen Peixun's "Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn"

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**Abstract**—Moon is the same bright moon, but causes their various imaginations because of different angles of the viewers. Through more than 150 years, Beethoven, Debussy, Chen Peixun, the composers from three different countries in the world talked about three different emotions, different life experiences, different musical genres, different creation backgrounds, different music performances, different artistic conceptions, which interworked into their unique moonlight. The moonlight is soft and gloomy, or quiet and clear, or painful and helpless. But no matter what kind of moonlight, it all expresses the pursuit of individuality of the composer as well as the infinite love of life and nature. This article compares the three different moonlights in order to reveal the different music image and its charm of these three works.

**Keywords**—*Beethoven; Debussy; Chen Peixun; classical music; romantical music; impressionism music; modern national music*

## I. INTRODUCTION

People always have infinite beautiful prayer and desire for the "moonlight", "Moonlight" has become the theme of poetry, painting and composing in ancient and modern literati's heart. Whether it is clear bright, glorious "moonlight", or misty, between the shadows, it is always given by people the longing of good vision, unlimited reverie and harmonious happy life.

Through more than 150 years of time and space, three composers over three centuries and from three different countries of the world yet interpreted the "moonlight" with three different life experience, music genre, creation background, musical performance and artistic conception.

## II. DIFFERENT LIFE EXPERIENCES AND DIFFERENT MUSICAL GENRES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 - 1827) was born in 1770 from an ordinary poor family in Bonn City near Rhine River in Germany, the hardships of life left a deep imprint to Beethoven's young mind. He loved music from his childhood and with his sensitive spirituality he began to show his outstanding music talent, when he was 11-year-old he participated in the band's instrumental music and band conductor. The young Beethoven, after experienced the

Reformism Enlightenment Movement in German "Enlightened despotism" period to the bourgeois revolution, at the same time he also experienced the ups and downs of life, in order to the pursuit of music art, he was not disappointed by the failed love, or get depressed or sad and frustrated by his deafness, on the contrary, all these laid out his belief and determination to achieve his own ideal, and created the inspiration, savvy and arrogant uninhibited unique personality in his music creation. Beethoven's life was completely proved a famous saying of a famous philosopher: "Suffering is the best teacher of life".

On the music creation road Beethoven inherited and carried forward the creation essence of Haydn, Mozart and other classical music masters, first to create the perfect transition of music creation between Classic and Romanticism these two periods, and became the pioneer of New Romanticism Music. In Beethoven's works "Moonlight Sonata" (music work) became the rare treasure with the most anti-traditional idea and unique emotional personality.

Achille-Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on the outskirts of Paris. This small town is located in the picturesque island of France, is the Holy Land of Arts that artists showed special preference to. Debussy was influenced by his aunt Mrs. Slutan in his childhood so he was very fond of music. When he was a teenager, he studied piano from Mrs. Motel. In the year of 1872, he was accepted to the Paris Conservatory of Music to learn piano and composition theory. When he was 20 years old he won the Rome Award with his music work of "Prodigal son". This music genius student learned the sacred rules of music during the study period in the music academy, he was gradually reluctant to accept all the rules and regulations of the music education, and began to become obedient to the "rules", sometimes he was diligent in learning and sometimes learning from time to time, but his attachment of music is eternal. By chance, he came into contact with the creative art of the Impressionist painter, and showed especially strong interests with the poetic painting theory of the Impressionist painter Pissarro Manette, he carefully studied the idea of the Impressionist painters: "Paint a theme for the sake of color, not for the theme itself". Impressionist painter's characteristics: "Keep the independence of painting, at the same time show the spirit of the times,

especially reflected in founding poetic life from the most local themes and the most indispensable daily life". Impressionist painter's painting method: "full of the reality of outer light", "make the first impression clear in emotions". Debussy applied the true meaning of creation painting of the Impressionist painter to the creation of music. He paid special attention to find and capture poetic and pictorial splendor from localized theme and the most indispensable daily life, so that to make the freedom of Impressionism music creation surpass the freedom of Romanticism music creation, and more strength, more abundant. In Debussy's artistic career he created "Impressionist music genre" and soon approved by the French music authority at that time, he deserved to be the founder of Impressionist music.

The biography author Verizon, has commented on Debussy and Beethoven: "Debussy separated the music of last century from the nineteenth century, which is as great as Beethoven's separation between nineteenth century music and the eighteenth century music".

Lv Wencheng (1898-1981) was born in Xiangshan, Guangdong province of China, and moved to Shanghai with his father when he was 3 years old. The young Lv Wencheng lived in Shanghai's "colorful world", accepted the influence of the Western pop music and local music, and deeply fell in love with music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, China was in a specific historical period. China suffered warlord separatist and regime while foreign powers infiltrated into China and attempt to occupy Chinese nation. When the national hardship and national crisis happened, the big city's comfortable life did not make Lv Wencheng linger, when he saw Shanghai was divided into their respective concessions by foreign powers, and even the Chinese people's own park also hung the plate of "Chinese and dog can not enter", all these things deeply hurt his heart and inspired his love of motherland and miss the hometown. He went back to his hometown and devoted his unremitting efforts to the heritage and revitalization of Guangdong national music. He created a number of Guangdong folk music, Cantonese opera "Drunk peace" is a typical work. Not only that, he was bold in innovation, he invented the national musical instrument Gao Hu, which made tremendous contributions for Chinese nation's music development. Lv Wencheng was deserved to be the grand master of Chinese national music.

Chen Peixun (1921-2006) originally from Hepu Guangxi and was born in Hong Kong. He learned piano with his uncle at an early age. In Middle School he learned piano and composition theory from pipe organist La Ford and Smith. In 1939 he entered the Shanghai National Music College and further studied Dmitry's composer techniques from Tan Xiaolin. After the outbreak of the war, Chen Peixun taught in art institutions of Hong Kong, Qujiang, Chongqing, Shanghai and other places. After the liberation, he was the professor and teaching director of department of composition in Central Conservatory of Music for a long time. In the 1980s, he taught at the Department of Arts and Education at the Hong Kong Baptist College. During this period, he studied orchestration from former Soviet experts Yalupov and Gunov and then lived in Hong Kong, he died in Hong Kong in February 2006.

Chen Peixun's modern works are mainly include the piano music "Selling Groceries", "Si Chun", "Han Tian Lei", "Partita of Double Flying Butterflies", "Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn"; the symphonic poems "Surging Thoughts Highly as Wave", "Exceed from the Beginning", the symphony "Offering Sacrifice in the Qingming Festival" and so on. The symphonic poem "Exceed from the Beginning" has been awarded the first prize of the 30th Anniversary of Founding; the symphony "Offering Sacrifice in the Qingming Festival" won the Excellence Award of the first National Symphony works. Music producer Chen Peixun dedicated his whole life to China's music career, he witnessed the development of China's music industry, and his music creation has played a huge and far-reaching impact on the development of China's modern music career.

### III. DIFFERENT CREATION BACKGROUND

Beethoven's Piano Sonata (2 of the No. 27 Work) #c minor piano sonata "Fantasia Sonata" was created in 1801, for why does this music work named by "Moonlight Sonata", the music industry has different opinions, one theory is: This song is Beethoven used to dedicate to Giulietta Guicciardi (1784-1856), when Beethoven was in love with her. On November 16, 1801 Beethoven wrote to Le, referring Giulietta Guicciardi he said: "She loves me, and I love her too". But by the beginning of 1802, Giulietta Guicciardi had fallen in love with the Earl Robert Harlanburg and married him in 1803. Another kind of theory is: Adding the name of "Moonlight" is due to the poet Ludwig Rellstab (1799-1860), and he had commented on the "Fantasia Sonata": "The first movement reminiscent of as the swaying little boat on the flashing lake of Lucerne in Switzerland under the moonlight". Rellstab's commentary seems to have laid the "Moonlight". The other kind of theory is: in the night when Beethoven was out for performance, he leisurely walked on a quiet path near the Rhine, from a distant there came intermittently piano sound playing "Fantasia Sonata", along with direction the sound came from, Beethoven slowly came to a cottage, the moonlight was like a mirror shining onto a blind girl who was playing the piano, Beethoven then entered the room, pressed the key through the soft moonlight and played this music improvisational for the blind girl, so this "Fantasia Sonata" was changed into "Moonlight Sonata", even the later primary school textbooks were also recorded this legend. But there is also a commentary against to use "Moonlight" as the name, the Russian pianist Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) said: "Moonlight" in music description should be meditation, contemplative, quiet, in short always the soft and bright mood, "# c Minor Sonata" The first movement from the first note to the last note is completely tragic, so it is a sky full of clouds with gloomy emotions. "Even some people called "#c Minor Sonata" as "Park Pavilion Sonata". Regardless how to comment on the origin of "Moonlight Sonata", the "Moonlight Sonata" has been deeply engraved in people's minds for a long time and it completely replaced the "#c Minor Sonata" with "Fantasia Sonata".

Beethoven created more than 300 pieces of music work in his life, many works are full of revolutionary and full of revolutionary passion, only "Moonlight Sonata" used human

emotion description as an important means of artistic expression, it is really rare.

Debussy is the pioneer of innovative Impressionist music, and his works highlight the poetic depiction of natural landscape and the moment feeling for objective scene without modification. Piano music "Moonlight" is the second song of Debussy's "Suite Bergamasque", it was created in 1890, the name of the suite came from Debussy's deep impression for the beautiful landscape in North Begonia area during his study in Italy, and it was created with full of inspiration and published in 1905. "Moonlight" is also the classic work among Debussy's works which transform from romantic music to impressionist music. Use music to capture the beautiful natural scenery, use music to describe the moonlight scenery, the song has a quiet, clear melody, like a magnificent splendid picture, every corner is full of poetic - this is the infinite charm "Moonlight" bring to us.

Lv Wencheng was a modern composer, folk musical instrument performer of Cantonese music. The 1930s is China's most painful, most humiliating period; The country has been disintegrated, people are suffering from wars, Chinese and foreign robbers are arrogant and domineering and act recklessly, Chinese people are struggling under their iron heels ... with the mentality to care for the fate of the country, in a night of Mid-Autumn Festival, he came to the Outer West Lake which located at the south of Gu Shan and the west of the West Lake, it was known as "Moon over the peaceful lake in autumn" which is one of the top ten scenery of West Lake in Hangzhou, he ascend a height to enjoy a distant view. The moonlight of West Lake in Mid-Autumn night was exceptionally enchanting against the background of simple and elegant landscape, all he saw was crystal clear. Beautiful scenery did not make Lv Wencheng obsessed and intoxicated, on the contrary it inspired his emotional imagination. Looking at the tens of thousands of hectares of West Lake beautiful scenery could keep a temporary security, but the whole Chinese nation has been facing a disaster and in a critical situation, with the helpless concern in his heart, he could only use "drunk" to temporary release his worry and concern; use a "drunk" word to get temporarily peace; use "drunk" word to temporarily ease the hatred of family and country. The musical conception of Guangdong folk music "Drunk Peace" in his mind has been completed here under the autumn moon. The music uses Guangdong Cantonese opera as based tone and blend into the Jiangnan folk music, so that the whole music is not only gorgeous and lively but also clear and melodious. Composer used the beautiful view of West Lake to pray for the swift rise of the great Chinese nation; hope hundreds of millions of Chinese people unite together and fight courageously; the just people's war will overcome all evil and achieve the final victory. Cantonese music "Drunk Peace" painted a musical version of splendid picture of "A lovely Homeland" with deep emotions, and he was convinced that the future of the motherland will stand in the east of the world just like "Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn". "The real idea of the music work "Drunk Peace" was absolutely not from a leisurely and carefree mood, but from a modern famous composer - Lv Wencheng's advocating ideological sentiment and the revelation of his true feelings for lofty patriotism, it is

also the deep interpretation of "The drinker is not care for the wine" and the true intention of the name "Drunk Peace".

#### IV. DIFFERENT MUSICAL PERFORMANCE, DIFFERENT ARTISTIC CONCEPTION

Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" is a music work with a specific "personal" emotion, "because is feels for people and express for emotions" is the performance of this music, it changed the normal music rhythm fast - Slow - fast which classical sonata used, and boldly explored a set of well used and smoothly romantic performance technique, the whole music has three movements and he used to the Adagio - Allegro - presto to form a climax stack, so that the rhythm sensation is clear and true, the music is compact convergence which brought a brand new music effect, so it could be rated as an unsurpassed one.

The first movement uses single trilogy # c minor 2/2 beat introduced a calm and orderly adagio to express the depressed and sad feelings. Starting from the middle exposition part, the music increased the sadness to cause the turbulence, so that the music enter the climax, then under the control of low voice the music gradually tend to smooth ,the progress slowly slow down and the music gradually weakened... the end of the first movement.

The second movement starts with complex trilogy, it uses triple time Allegretto with a style similar to the "humoresque" or "minuets", this movement eases the melancholy mood from static to dynamic of the first movement. It enhances the emotionality and the infectivity of music with self-mockery and self-answer artistic expression, and further reveals the inner feeling complex entanglement of "people" and the deep rush mood for "people" to express themselves. As the famous Hungarian pianist Liszt commented, this movement in terms of the whole music "It is a small flower between two cliffs".

After the transition between preceding and following of the second movement, the third movement can not wait to form the # c4/4 presto, this movement strengthen the overall activity of the music, the composer's disturbed emotion suddenly evolved into a wave-like situation, arrogant and angry shout and vent make the music appears strong fluctuations, jumping and stirring. Music's waves come one after another and even get more crazy, composer expresses his brave facing up to all the obstacles and endless struggle one by one. After the two specific climax of the third movement, the presto slowly turn into adagio, from strong to weak until the end of the movement's presentation. The composer firmly believe that: only to overcome the melancholy, eliminate the entanglement, unremitting self-improvement, dare to take responsibility and never stop, "people"'s wish will eventually achieve. "Moonlight Sonata" uses harmony as the main body of the music, there are triad, seven chords, broken chords, song legato, staccato occurs and the tritone almost throughout the entire music.

The whole music of Debussy's "Moonlight" continuously uses dreamlike flashing colors; chords and light arpeggios sound are so beautiful and bright like the moonlight sprinkled on the lake in the night, sketching out a natural watercolor

landscape with water and sky combined together. This music uses a single trilogy A-B-A 'style.

The first 8 bars of A section go straight to the music theme, on the basis of chord conversion it uses unessential note to highlight the main melody, dynamic color gradually realized through the processing of the music. Develop the main melody with the change of theme and formed a gleaming unique melody style of impressionist which is completely different from the wide breath, ups and downs of romantic music style. The music uses its unique creation techniques, depicting the moving scene of moonlight swaying in the quiet lake. The last 11 bars of A section, the composer abandoned the traditional harmony function to smooth melody, he uses an uncoordinated chord music melody to create music fluctuations, sometimes smooth, sometimes ups and downs, so that to enrich the color of the music. The tone appears continuously ups and downs to enhance the music activity, so as to push the music to a small climax, as if the breeze blowing on the lake surface and the blue water gently waves. Before the end of A section the chord arpeggio is so crystal clear like the transparent dew on the leaves drop in the lake, the harmonious sound lead the music to brightness.

B section uses a lot of sustained note and broken chords so that the melody is free to start, this part is like the after the lake waves under the reflection of moonlight spread with circles, and then slowly re-gathered with sparkling.

A' section continued the Arpeggio of B section, on the background it reproduce the theme melody of A section, so that the music is hazy but clear, penetrate glory from soft. The middle part of A' section uses chord to set off texture, arpeggio makes the color more hazy and faint, the melody become slower and weaker and gradually fade away until the disappearance and get back to the moonlight quiet picture.

At the end of the A 'section, the composer uses a three degree overlapping chords to show the "light" and "color" set off each other, in order to make a clear contrast effect. Music from dynamic to static to express the soft and quiet, when converted from the E major to D flat tune the music change from static back to dynamic, still use arpeggios to complete and constitute a very unique secondary supplement termination. Like a burst of breeze blowing the flowers and trees of the lake, sparse leaves rubbing make rustling sound, showing beautiful moonlight night scenery, and finally once again freeze to beautiful and soft scenery with quiet environment and bright moonlight. Some people once comment the "Moonlight" that: "Ascending arpeggios is so graceful and light and burst like a fountain, and then back to peace within the alternation between the keynote and dominant, the theme developed under this background, wide, bright and full of expressions".

"Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn" is a typical Chinese folk music pentatonic work, after adapted into a piano solo, the music uses fantastic wave night scenery to blend the composer's patriotic complex which is the expectation of the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation together, from miss to blessing slowly pour out his passionate love to motherland and people. The music uses the narrative music performance techniques 4/4 beat, composed of four sections.

The first section (1-9 bars) is the introduction, five degree interval on left hand bass area, sounds like the night is coming and a bell rings from far to near, the music enter the section with a soft melody. A breeze blows on the lake surface, the water gently floats ripples. The grace notes on right hand decorated the lake like granules to make it more crystal clear. After some slow crescendo the music slowly diminuendo, the composer's mind is filled with thousands thoughts, emotional entanglement gradually appeared.

The second part (bars 10-13). As the intensity of the bass department, the theme color is gradually appearing, the intensive arpeggio texture on right hand provide a misty, hazy feeling in the clear and bright music, the melody wandering ups and downs in the crescendo and decrescendo, the composer lead the music into a imagination artistic conception.

The third part (14-17 bars). The music from soft and beautiful quiet into the lively and amiable desire, music performance is more pure, the melody is more prominent, the rhythm is clearer, and the music is running more free and smooth. In the 15-16 bars, the tremolo on left hand imitate dulcimer's round play, the grace note of the right hand at the altissimo area likes the portamento at the high position of Gao Hu, so that music tends to be clear, misty, sad, bored, tangle, miss and all the knot seems to be gradually healed.

The fourth part (18-22 bars). This part is the most moving and with the most emotional expressions of the whole music. The use of tritone, quadruplet... twelve-tone and multi-melody calmly push the music to the climax. Composer climb up and overlook the West Lake and enjoy the moonlight night view; Endless blue water under the bright and soft moonlight, accompanied by the sparkling reflections of trees, flowers, mountains and houses, the reflections are flickering and trigger his thousands of thoughts filled with emotion. The composer prays from the deep heart in silence and expectation the heroic struggle of Chinese people will be able to achieve the final victory, the people of all nationalities toast and blessing the days of "Golden autumn with fertile water, happy harvest" will eventually come. The beautiful scenery of lake under the moonlight at Mid-Autumn Festival renders the fantasy world more dignified and more magnificent. The emotional development of the music wave after wave, the music is ups and downs but the melody is always relax and happy with joyful state.

The last part (25-26 bars). Music seems to go back to calm, use the dynamic to set off the static, on the calm lake, the moonlight is like a beautiful shy girl who put on a layer of white veil and gently move ... It makes people feel that after eliminate all the insects, our motherland exudes a harmonious original ecological atmosphere once again, all the moonlight and sky has restored the aesthetic world, and create a hazy vision and good mood for people.

#### V. THREE BEAMS OF "MOONLIGHT" ARE ALL UNIQUE AND EACH WITH ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS

The three "moonlight" through time and space accompanied by the glittering stars in the Milky Way, giving a fantastic attachment and add radiance and beauty to each other.



Among the three "Moonlight", Beethoven and Debussy's works are more about the unique "emotional personality" and "hazy artistic conception". Chen Peixun's "Moonlight" expressed the "commonness", "nationality" and "ideological content" during the certain period.

"Moonlight Sonata" pours out emotional entanglement from the life experience, and personality creation of the character is the important means of music creation. From the music performance, the whole work from static to dynamic, progressive from melancholy - catharsis - crying layer by layer, for the music form it uses the legato of six chords, seven chords and broken chord, and tritone through the whole music to strengthen the dynamic melody and enhance the infectivity of music. This work focus on delicate with clear strong and weak separation, make break through and rapid progress, so it is a typical music boutique of the Romantic Music.

"Moonlight" is a work which is "natural and unrestrained, informal" and focusing on music performance. "Painting with music" is the composer's usual way, "sound comes from the heart", "statics within the dynamic", "painting within the music", "music within the painting" is the essence of the whole music. Capture, feedback and express the vision of nature from the thousands of world view, pursuit of perfection in the hazy memories, is the classics of this music work. The music from the beginning to the end always keep the melody lines like songs and paintings, add duplet at multiple places to make it more active and stretch. The use of medieval modes, parallel chords, combined with a lot of traditional three-dimensional structure chord and subordinate triad and auxiliary seven chords, the soft chords, elegant ascending arpeggios and soothing melody constitutes a beautiful flow of light color, showing an elegant, quiet, slim, bright and poetic exquisite picture. No wonder the famous writer Romain Rolland sincerely called Debussy was a "great fantasyland painter".

"Moon over the peaceful lake in autumn" sigh of the concern about the country and people, but reflecting the passionate patriotic love and the expectation of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The whole music is the essence of Chinese classical music's "noble, elegant, virtual and quiet", and is based on Chinese folk music as a carrier. So it is an outstanding Modern Music work piece which combined the creation essence of Western Classical Music, Romanticism and Impressionism Music all together. The whole music is short and pithy with clear theme, endogenous connotation and obvious thinking path in order to highlight the unique artistic conception of "Oriental Piano". The core tone of "Moon over the Peaceful Lake in Autumn" is "opening", "developing", "changing", "concluding", with the entire music from static to dynamic and from dynamic to static. From static feels the "careful consideration" and from dynamic expresses the "beautiful prospects", music closely linked with each other from opening, developing, changing and concluding. In the music it uses a lot of chords and strength the pentatonicism, cleverly use grace note, arpeggios, tremolo and vibrato to make perfection imitation of a variety of national musical instruments. The use of tritone... twelve notes and complex rhythm enhance the music performance, the harmony of the melody and the structure parallel between the chords make the

music performance more active and stretch, five tone melody fluctuations have been used throughout the whole music.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Time flies and passes swiftly like flowing water, moonlight wakes up the memories. Time shuttled for more than 150 years went across three centuries, the same moon interpreted three composers' different life trajectory, different periods, different music genre and different styles of artistic conception. These three "moonlight" music brought people with inspiration. With the passage of time, we wish the development of music around the world could bring more beautiful and moving gospel of peace and happiness for human during the hard-working exploration and innovation.

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