

Research on the integration of piano techniques and national expressiveness in *Song of the Great Road*—Taking Wang Jianzhong's version as an example

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Abstract: As a representative composer in the exploration of nationalization of Chinese piano music, Wang Jianzhong created his adapted version of *Song of the Great Road*, which achieves an artistic expression with both technical depth and emotional tension through the innovative integration of Western piano techniques and Chinese national music elements, while retaining the revolutionary spirit and labor narrative of Nie Er's original work. Taking Wang Jianzhong's adapted version of *Song of the Great Road* as the research object, this paper adopts music ontology analysis, literature research and practical reflection methods to explore the integration logic of piano techniques and national expressiveness from three dimensions: creation background, technical characteristics and transformation of national expressiveness. The study finds that Wang Jianzhong achieved the piano interpretation of the original's work songs and resistance emotions through technical means such as octave skills, harmony reconstruction and rhythm transformation. His integration path provides an important paradigm for the teaching and dissemination of Chinese red piano works.

Keywords: *Song of the Great Road*; piano techniques; national expressiveness; integration path

1 Creation background and artistic orientation of Wang Jianzhong's *Song of the Great Road*

1.1 Adaptation motivations and artistic orientation of *Song of the Great Road*

There are two main backgrounds for Wang Jianzhong's adaptation of *Song of the Great Road*: one is the demand of the times, the other is his personal creative pursuit [1]. He hoped to carry forward the red classics in a new artistic form through piano, a Western musical instrument [2].

Compared with the original work, Wang Jianzhong's adaptation is not a simple melody transplantation, but a comprehensive artistic reconstruction: the original work is a monophonic song [3], while the piano arrangement transforms the work songs and resistance emotions of the original work into a more hierarchical and powerful piano language through polyphonic texture, harmonic reconstruction, rhythm transformation and other techniques [4].

The artistic orientation of Wang Jianzhong's piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road* can be summarized as "the piano reinterpretation of red classics and artistic inheritance of national spirit". On the basis of respecting the core spirit of the original work, it has integrated the rigorous structure of Western classical piano with the lyrical traits of Chinese national music.

2 Analysis of piano technical characteristics in Wang Jianzhong's piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road*

2.1 Structural techniques: the construction of thematic variation and narrative logic

In the piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road*, Wang Jianzhong gave full play to the instrumental characteristics of the piano and employed a series of targeted technical approaches. The work adopts a three-part structure of "theme presentation - variational development - climax recurrence", and constructs a distinct narrative logic through the technique of thematic variation, simulating the progress of labor scenes and the sublimation of resistance emotions. In terms of texture, it adopts a dichotomous texture of left-hand bass and right-hand melody. The left hand builds a stable rhythmic support based on eighth-note bass arpeggios, while the right hand presents the theme with sixteenth-note melody lines, simulating the work songs of road construction workers.

Wang Jianzhong achieved the gradual progression of emotions through multiple thematic variations. The variation techniques mainly fall into three categories: first, melodic variation. On the basis of retaining the core outline of the theme, the melodic line is enriched through ornamentation, expansion, contraction and other ways. Second, textural variation. The texture shifts from a dichotomous texture to a multi-layered texture, adding harmonic filling to middle voices and decorative notes to upper voices, forming a three-layered texture structure of "bass – middle voices – upper voices", simulating the shouts and responses of collective laborers; third, rhythmic variation. Through the use of syncopation and dotted rhythm, the regular rhythm of the thematic presentation section is broken, increasing the sense of movement and tension of the music.

2.2 Core performance techniques: precise control of dynamics, voices and tone touch

Wang Jianzhong adopted a layered dynamic design in his piano arrangement of *Song of the Great Road*, and precisely expressed the inner feelings of laborers and the revolutionary spirit through dynamic changes [5]. The most representative is the dynamic control technique of octave staccato. The texture structure ranges from simple to complex, with up to four voices at most, which imposes high demands on performers' voice processing skills. Through a variety of touch techniques, it creates rich timbre layers for the work and realizes the accurate transmission of national expressiveness [6].

2.3 National musical element transformation techniques: from folk music to piano language

The most prominent creative feature is the transformation of Chinese national music elements into piano language, which is mainly reflected in the nationalization of rhythm elements, melodic and harmonic elements in *Song of the Great Road*. In his piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road*, Wang Jianzhong adopted a Chinese folk pentatonic Gong mode and preserves the unique appeal of traditional folk music via pianistic adaptation of melodic lines [7]. Wang Jianzhong imitated the melody tune of national musical instruments (such as Suona and Erhu) through piano decorative notes (appoggiaturas, trills) and glissando techniques.

Wang Jianzhong's piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road* breaks through the traditional harmonic framework of Western classical piano and constructs a harmonic language with Chinese national characteristics. It constructs harmony based on the pentatonic scale, avoiding the semitonal dissonances in Western harmony, yielding soft, pure timbres.

3 Value enlightenment of the integration of performance techniques and national expressiveness

The in-depth integration of performance techniques and national expressive characteristics in Wang Jianzhong's piano arrangement *Song of the Great Road* provides multiple value enlightenments for the nationalization development of Chinese piano art, the inheritance of red culture and the innovation of piano teaching. Such integrated compositional practice verifies the core compositional principle of "dialectical unity of nationality and technicality" [8]. Wang Jianzhong

did not treat Western pianistic techniques as an isolated technical vehicle, but took the conveyance of Chinese folk musical charm as the core, carried out targeted transformations of techniques such as octave staccato and multi-voice texture. This approach not only avoids the emptiness brought by "mere technical accumulation", but also gets rid of the superficiality of "simple grafting of national elements".

As a globally popular musical instrument, the piano follows a unified system of performance techniques. The distinct national expressive quality that Wang Jianzhong infuses into the work through technical transformation makes the revolutionary spirit and labor aesthetics embodied in *Song of the Great Road* take a tangible artistic form—overseas audiences can perceive the sonority of labor through the dynamic changes of octave staccato, experience the national aesthetic charm through pentatonic harmony. This means that the international dissemination of national music does not need to sacrifice its own characteristics, but can build a bridge between "technical commonality" and "cultural uniqueness" through the integration of techniques and expressiveness.

At the same time, it offers a transformative path of "from performing techniques to cultural connotations" for piano teaching. For a long time, piano teaching has had a tendency of "emphasizing skill training while neglecting connotation excavation". However, the practice of *Song of the Great Road* shows that skill training and the cultivation of national expressive quality are complementary. By integrating national music knowledge and historical background interpretation into technical training and guiding students to understand the emotional logic and cultural connotation behind the technology, such practice serves as a vivid manifestation of cultural confidence in the field of art. With Western musical instruments as the carrier, Wang Jianzhong conveys the national spirit through technical innovation, proving that national culture does not need to rely on traditional musical instruments, but can gain fresh vitality through integration with modern artistic forms.

This exploration of integrating national cultural spirit with modern artistic forms and globally prevalent musical instruments enriches the art treasury of Chinese piano art. The successful practice of Wang Jianzhong's arrangement *Song of the Great Road* shows that the vitality of national culture does not lie in adhering to traditional forms, but in keeping pace with the times through innovation and transformation. With exquisite performance techniques serving as a bridge, the unique charm and profound spiritual connotations of national music can be perceived and resonated with by a broader audience, so that national culture can gain more far-reaching influence and more lasting vitality worldwide. For contemporary artists, this is undoubtedly both inspiration and motivation, urging them to actively explore the integration path of national culture and modern artistic expressions in their respective fields, so as to produce more excellent works featuring distinct national characteristics and cross-cultural appeal, and contribute to promoting the prosperity and development of Chinese culture as well as its global outreach.

4 Conclusion

The successful practice of Wang Jianzhong's arrangement *Song of the Great Road* not only enriches the repertoire of Chinese nationalized piano music, but also validates the artistic tenet of "the integration of technique and artistic expression". Through the in-depth integration of performing techniques and national artistic expression, it provides an important paradigm for the creation, teaching and dissemination of red piano works, shows the vivid expression of cultural confidence in the field of art, and offers profound reference for the integration of Chinese national culture and modern artistic forms. It is of great significance for promoting Chinese piano art to the world and enhancing the influence of Chinese national culture.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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