



Research on the Performance Style of Jianzhong Wang's Piano Piece "Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms"

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Abstract

Jianzhong Wang's piano song "Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms" is adapted from the guqin song, which incorporates the imagery characteristics of Chairman Mao's poem "Bu Suan Zi Yongmei". The work not only blooms plum blossoms in the cold winter, but also conveys the spiritual connotation of optimism. This paper elaborates from the four dimensions of timbre imitation, vocal rhyme, breath charm and verve, puts forward insights on the performance style of this work through meticulous research, Show a strong Chinese style.

Subject Areas

Music

Keywords

Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms, Timbre Imitation, Vocal Rhyme, Breath Charm, Verve

1. Introduction

Mr. Wang's piano arrangement "Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms" is not only a model of showing the charm of ancient music on the piano, but also a hymn to the spirit of plum blossoms and revolutionary spirit. When performing this piece, the performers need to appreciate the connotation of the times that the work gives to plum blossoms, and convey the revolutionary optimism spirit of "Speak with plum blossoms". How to grasp the style charm of this work and explore the humanistic meaning of the work, this article will explain from four aspects: timbre imitation, vocal rhyme, Breath charm and verve.

2. Timbre Imitation

2.1. Imitation of the Sound of the Guqin

Guqin, also known as “Yaoqin”, has a history of more than 3500 years, and is respected and loved by poets, and has played a vital role in the development of Chinese music. “Among the eight notes, only the string is the most, and the piano is the first” is a tribute to the musical expressiveness of the guqin [1]. The guqin has three timbres, namely overtone, scattered and pressed tones, corresponding to “heaven”, “earth” and “man”. This article briefly elaborates on the imitation of scattered and pressed tones in piano music.

2.1.1. Scattered

In bars 1 - 5 of the song, the piano’s simulation of the scattered tone is reflected, and the technique of “moisturizing” the timbre is used. The right hand plays the main melody part, and the left hand has the same melody as the right hand, in the form of an octave ornamental leaning. Before playing, you should first think of the timbre to be imitated in your mind, the sound of the scattered sound is far-reaching, as if you are in the forest and bamboo cultivation, next to the flowing water, in such a beautiful environment to stroke the piano, a special elegant feeling. The left hand naturally spreads its fingers when playing octaves, the touch keys are light and shallow, and the wrist is relaxed, showing the thick tone of the bass zone. When playing octave chords with the right hand, slow down the keys, grasp the keys and push them inward to produce a deep and soft tone. When playing, pay attention to the holding mark on the Piano notation, the time value is long, and there is a feeling of reverberation. In the first 5 bars, there is an undulation of tone, the player should follow the direction of the note, the “12” of the third bar goes up, the “5” of the third bar goes up, and the fourth bar “562” melody continues to develop upwards, reaching the highest point of the fifth bar, the timbre has a sense of cohesion, and the end of the phrase continues to carry on to the next phrase. When playing with both hands, focus on the main melody of the quarter note in the right hand, control the volume to maintain the intensity of “pp”, the rhythm is accurate, listen carefully to the harmony direction when playing, and listen to the resonant sound effect brought by the vibration of the piano strings after the keys are lowered, and change the pedal and drop keys in real time.

2.1.2. Pressed Tones

Bars 18 - 23 of the piece imitate the Pressed tones of the guqin. In bars 19 and 22, there is a rhythmic pattern of four sixteenth notes, and unlike most pieces, the composer added ligatures to the first and third sixteenth notes. When playing, the first and third sixteenth notes have the same pitch, and the third sixteenth note is maintained by the first sixteenth note after adding the ligature and does not need to be played again. In this way, the effect of “pressing the strings” is produced, and the second sixteenth note is different from the first pitch, so the finger can be slightly raised up when playing, making the note clearer. When

playing this section, the speed of the touch is slightly slowed down, and the fingers are used to play, and the keyboard is “touched”, and the rhythm of the sixteenth note is accurate, maintaining the flow of the melody.

2.2. Imitation of the Timbre of Other National Instruments

In addition to imitating the sound of the guqin, the composer also imitated other national musical instruments, such as the guzheng and the pipa.

Bars 86 - 91 of the composition are selected passages connecting the second and third lanes, bars 86 and 87 are decomposed arpeggios with left and right hands, and bar 87 is a repetition of octaves below bar 86, with a rhythmic pattern of thirteen conjunctions, which are faster and more dynamic. Here is to imitate the “scratching” of the guzheng, each note must be clear and even, the arm is relaxed and moves the wrist, the fingertips touch the keys, and a series of sounds are “scraped” with a movement, naturally crescendo to the highest note. The alternation of hands requires natural fluidity, the last accent is played by the left hand across the right hand, quickly down the key, the fingertips are explosive, and the voice is penetrating to achieve the effect of the strongest accent.

An important means of presenting musical content in Chinese piano arrangements is timbre imitation, in piano music, leaning sound, column arpeggio, decomposition arpeggio, decorative sound, etc. have the timbre color of imitating national musical instruments, players can reasonably use their “Feel connected”, using appropriate touch methods to enhance the expression of music.

3. Vocal Rhyme

Vocal rhyme is closely related to vocal performance, just like the tone and tone of voice when people speak. Unlike foreign languages, Chinese is “one character with multiple sounds, one word with many rhymes”. When playing the piano, if every note is played very loudly, it does not meet the characteristics of “one word and multiple rhymes” [2]. Chinese works should have both “real sound” and “virtual sound”, and grasp the characteristics of music between virtual and real.

Bars 217 - 220 are the second half of the climactic passage of the piece, which continues the epilogue. From the Piano notation, it can be seen that the left hand whispered part is the main melody, and the right hand is running up and down a series of notes. When playing with the left hand, you should play the “real tone”, touch the keys deeply, pay attention to the tone and stress of the melody, maintain the tone appropriately, and the melody is coherent. When playing with the right hand, you should play the “virtual note”, grasp the stress of each string of notes, and raise the volume as the melody progresses. Touch the keys with your fingertips, caress the keyboard, and play a weak and light timbre, adding a hazy softness to the song. When the hands are coordinated, the right hand follows the melody of the left hand, and the “virtual sound” is used as the “real sound” accompaniment in the high voice, reflecting the wonderful performance technique

of Chinese works, and producing the charm outside the piano.

4. Breath Charm

Charm is a very important factor when playing Chinese works [3]. “Vivid charm” is the common aesthetic standard pursued by traditional Chinese art, and the line sense of the melody should be fully maintained when playing, so as to achieve the continuity of the breath. Chinese piano music retains the traditional Chinese linear thinking, focusing on the characteristics of melody and structural flow. Taking bars 120 - 127 of the song as an example, the second half of the three lanes is selected, with the right hand as the main melody and the left hand breaking down the arpeggio for accompaniment. In the early days of practicing this section, the author did not pay attention to the sense of line of the melody, which led to the poor performance of this section. Bar 121 and bar 125 have a hold note on the right hand and a descending arpeggio on the left hand, and because there are many notes, the author mistook the melody here for the “echo” of the previous bar, and took a weak treatment when playing. Later, under the guidance of the teacher and his own understanding, he discovered this error, and compared with the main melody, he could find that this is the theme melody, not an “echo”. In the early stage, because I did not pay attention to the large line of the music, the overall performance was very “broken”, and the melody was intermittent and could not be coherent. After sorting out the melody line, it is necessary to pay attention to the penetration of the breath, that is, the flow direction of the melody, the breathing of the phrase, etc. Long notes are often notes that condense emotions, and the right hand octave “5” in bar 121 is at the end of the sentence, and the touch key should be deeper and more transparent, and the wrist is slightly raised to continue the next phrase after playing; Some of the short notes are passed, often located on weak beats, and the octave “7” touch key of the 120th bar with a point sixteenth note should be light, following the previous note “1” to the “5” of the next bar. In addition to the length of the notes, the pitch direction of the melody is also very important, in bars 123 and 124, the first octal note is the beginning of a phrase, the pitch gradually rises, and by the 124th bar begins to decrease, the intensity and emotion should rise and fall with the line of the melody, and finally stop at the closing note.

When playing Chinese piano music, you should follow the sense of the large line of the melody, follow the ups and downs of the line, sing the melody silently in your heart, pay attention to the breath between phrases or sections, and the continuous breath runs through the entire work.

5. Verve

Verve refers to spiritual charm, that is, the style of poetry and painting. Verve also refers to an ideal artistic realm, which is naturally expressive, far-reaching, and ingenious, reflecting a quiet and distant artistic conception. The Verve involved in this article is limited to the spiritual charm displayed by the plum

blossoms in the work, and it is interpreted and interpreted in combination with the significance of the times. The author will briefly describe the style grasp of Verve in the piano song “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossom*” from the two aspects of plum blossom’s strong and unyielding character and optimistic and open-minded national spirit.

5.1. Strong and Unyielding Character

Plum blossoms bloom in the coldest December, fighting against the cold storm and snow still maintain their own fragrance, elegant with a proud body, is a symbol of the great spirit of our nation. Today, the epidemic has achieved a key victory, which is inseparable from countless white angels and volunteers, who are the embodiment of plum blossoms in the new era. When playing “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms*”, the performers also need to have a sincere heart to praise the “soul” of this elegant and proud plum blossom.

Bars 95 - 106 of the composition are the second interlude of the first part of the variations. Section 95 is marked with the musical symbol “*Con civetteria*”, which translates into foreign language as “deliberately showy”, which can be understood here to mean the need to play the “swaying shape” of plum blossoms. When playing 95 bars, the right hand should be very coherent, the volume rises and falls with the pitch of the melody, and it ends at “1”, the melody seems to “turn in a circle”, and you can imagine the image of plum blossoms blooming and delicate when playing. Bar 96 and 97 have decorative notes, the adjacent time value is very short, almost played at the same time as the sixteenth note, and the decorative note is played with 4 fingers when playing, very quickly streaking, showing the image of plum blossoms being slightly shaken by the wind and snow, but still standing. In the second half of the score, there are 8 bars of polyphonic Canon, the left and right hands echo each other, like a rotation of singing, but also like the dialogue struggle between plum blossoms and wind and snow, when playing, highlight the high voice melody of both hands, the timbre of the left hand is calm, the timbre of the right hand is crisp, the intensity is gradually enhanced, the speed of touch key concentration is faster, the wrist drives the fingers to play, pay attention to the sense of line and coherence.

5.2. Optimistic and Open-Minded National Spirit

The piano arrangement “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms*” not only shows the proud figure of plum blossoms in ancient songs, but also originally adds the image of new plum blossoms in Chairman Mao’s poem “*Bu Suan zi Yongmei*”. Chairman Mao’s “plum blossoms” are “beautiful flowers and branches”, and the moment when plum blossoms are in full bloom is full of brilliant vitality. The piano song “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms*” presents an optimistic and open-minded national spirit, and a positive attitude towards life and great patriotic sentiment are the source of strength that has always inspired people to forge ahead and persist in the unyielding struggle against foreign invaders and op-

pressors in the development of the Chinese nation for thousands of years. There are many places in the music where this attitude is reflected.

Bars 202-209 are the climactic passages of the whole song, and the melody reaches its climax in bar 204 through the setting of two bars, which is a melody that the composer innovates on the basis of guqin music. The score marks that the speed here is a line plate, the speed slows down, and the octave faster than the previous octave six-tone rhythm melody is “widened”, and the momentum continues to increase, as if the cold winter has passed, a hundred flowers are blooming, and the land of China is full of life. When playing, the octave chord fingers of the right hand should tightly grasp the keys, direct the entire arm strength to the fingertips, “pierce” into the keyboard, and play a concentrated and resonant sound. Special attention should be paid to the sense of coherent lines of octaves, and the breathing of the phrase, the ups and downs of timbre and the direction of the melody should not be ignored due to the technical difficulties of octaves. The left hand plays the decomposed chord with the arm and wrist to play flexibly and relaxed, and the first octave bass down key of bar 204 is deep and powerful, echoing the high-pitched voice of the right hand, giving the timbre a “foundation”. The rest of the sixteenth notes refer to the belly touch, grabbing the beat accent of each bar, clear and even, smooth and natural. The left and right hands cooperate to coordinate nature, and the sound is “noted” into the keys, and the performance should not be too anxious, the mood is stable, the emotions are put at the fingertips, and the optimism and open-mindedness of plum blossoms are enthusiastically praised to welcome the blooming spring.

6. Conclusion

The piano song “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms*” is mainly based on the tone of guqin, integrates the elements of national musical instruments, and combines the ancient and modern novelty of “plum blossoms” to show China’s strong national color and convey the national spirit of vigor and optimism. This article focuses on the grasp of the playing style of the piano song “*Three Alleys of Plum Blossoms*”, and elaborates from the four aspects of timbre imitation, vocal rhyme, Breath charm and verve, hoping to provide some help to the performers who play this piece. As learners of the new era, we should fully understand the excellent traditional Chinese culture, learn the ancient and contemporary national spirit, enhance the cultural confidence of major countries, and believe that Chinese piano works will definitely be able to enter a higher and larger world stage.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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