

# **Exploration of the Fusion of Ethnic Charm and Piano Expression——An Analysis of the Nationalized Creation of Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music"**

**Ze Chen, Qianfang Wei**

Department of Music, College of Teacher Education, Longyan University, Fujian, China 364000

**Abstract:** The "nationalization" of Chinese piano music has been one of the core propositions in music creation over the past century. Its essence lies in how to convey the cultural connotation and artistic charm of Chinese national music through the instrumental characteristics of the Western piano. The piano work "Xinjiang Dance Music" by contemporary composer Zhuang Yao, which takes Tajik folk songs from Xinjiang as creative materials, has made fruitful explorations in melody processing and modal innovation, becoming a typical example of the nationalized creation of Chinese piano music. Taking "Xinjiang Dance Music" as the research object, this paper discusses its creative logic and artistic achievements in the nationalized expression of piano by analyzing the source and artistic processing methods of the work's melody materials, as well as the breakthrough and innovation of the modal system, so as to provide theoretical reference and practical experience for the further development of the nationalization of Chinese piano music.

**Keywords:** Chinese piano music; nationalization; Tajik music; creative characteristics

**DOI:10.12417/3029-2328.26.03.017**

## **1.The Development Context and Core Propositions of the Nationalization of Chinese Piano Music**

### **1.1 The Historical Evolution of Nationalization**

The exploration of the nationalization of Chinese piano music can be roughly divided into three stages. The early 20th century to the mid-20th century was the enlightenment and foundation-laying stage. Creations during this period mainly adapted folk music and traditional tunes. For example, He Luting's "Buffalo Boy's Flute Song" drew on folk flute melodies and traditional Chinese polyphonic thinking, realizing the integration of Chinese musical style and piano counterpoint techniques for the first time; Liu Tianhua adapted erhu pieces into piano music, attempting to restore the timbre characteristics of national musical instruments on the piano. The core goal of this stage was to "make the piano express Chinese music", solving the initial adaptation problem between national music and the piano.

The mid-20th century to the end of the 20th century was the development and maturity stage. Composers began to shift from simple melody adaptation to original creation, focusing on the in-depth integration of the modes, rhythms, and musical structures of national music with the harmony, texture, and performance techniques of the piano. For example, Wang Jianzhong's "Red Peonies Blossom Brilliantly" took Shanxi folk songs as materials, using piano techniques such as chord decomposition and rapid scales to enhance the drama and expressiveness of the work; Chu Wanghua's "Yellow River Piano Concerto" combined national epic nature with the symphonic nature of the piano, expanding the expressive dimension of Chinese piano music. Creations in this stage were no longer limited to "form similarity" but pursued "spirit similarity" more, focusing on the transmission of national emotions and cultural connotations.

Entering the 21st century, the exploration of the nationalization of Chinese piano music has shown diverse and personalized characteristics. Composers are no longer satisfied with the use of a single national music material but pay more attention to the in-depth excavation of regional culture, the integration of multi-ethnic musical elements, and the combination of modern composition techniques with national music traditions. Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang

"Dance Music" is a representative work of this period. With Tajik music as the core, it has made innovative treatments in melody, mode, rhythm, etc., which not only retains the original flavor of national music but also gives full play to the modern expressiveness of the piano, reflecting the new height of the nationalized creation of contemporary Chinese piano music.

## 1.2 The Core Propositions of Nationalization

The core proposition of the nationalization of Chinese piano music is essentially the adaptation problem between "foreign musical instruments" and "national culture", which can be specifically summarized into three levels: first, the piano transformation of national music materials, that is, how to accurately present the melody, rhythm, timbre and other characteristics of national songs and instrumental music through piano performance techniques and sound effects; second, the in-depth expression of national cultural connotations, that is, how to convey the nation's emotions, aesthetics, ways of thinking and cultural spirit through piano music to achieve "conveying morality through music"; third, the organic integration of tradition and modernity, that is, how to draw on modern composition techniques and aesthetic concepts on the basis of adhering to national music traditions to realize the timeliness and innovation of works. These three levels are interrelated and progressive. The piano transformation of national music materials is the foundation; without accurate material transformation, ethnic charm is out of the question. The in-depth expression of national cultural connotations is the core; only by conveying the spiritual core of the nation can the work have real vitality. The organic integration of tradition and modernity is the key; only by realizing the dialogue between tradition and modernity can Chinese piano music occupy a place on the world music stage. Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music" has achieved remarkable achievements in these three levels, providing a vivid practical case for solving the nationalization proposition.

## 2. Analysis of the Nationalized Creative Characteristics of Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music"

### 2.1 Melody Materials: Preservation and Artistic Processing of Ethnic Genes

Melody is the soul of music and the most recognizable feature of national music. The melody materials of Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music" are directly derived from Tajik folk songs in Xinjiang. As an ethnic minority living in the Pamir Plateau for generations, the Tajik people's folk songs have a distinct Central Asian musical style, with broad and ups and downs melody lines, sincere and unrestrained emotions, full of the heroism and simplicity of the plateau nation. In the use of materials, the work not only adheres to the faithful preservation of national music genes but also realizes the unity of ethnic charm and piano expressiveness through scientific artistic processing.

**Preservation of the Core Melody Framework**The melodies of Tajik folk songs are mostly based on the pentatonic scale but incorporate chromatic notes unique to Central Asian music, forming a unique modal color. The core melody of "Xinjiang Dance Music" completely follows the framework structure of Tajik folk songs. For example, the theme melody at the beginning of the work takes do, re, mi, sol, la as the core scale degrees, and the melody line shows undulating characteristics, which is highly consistent with the melody outline of the Tajik folk song "Eagle". This preservation of the core melody framework ensures the national identity of the work, allowing the audience to instantly capture the unique charm of Tajik music in Xinjiang. "Xinjiang Dance Music" adopts 6/8 time throughout, and the rhythmic pattern of the theme melody is completely consistent with the rhythm of the Tajik folk dance "Eagle Dance". Through the combination of eighth notes and sixteenth notes, it simulates the lightness and agility of the Eagle Dance, conveying the Tajik people's love for life and yearning for freedom.

**Innovative Techniques of Artistic Processing**On the basis of retaining the core melody framework, Zhuang Yao uses a variety of composition techniques to artistically process the original folk song melodies, making them more in line with the performance characteristics and expressiveness of the piano. Firstly, the ingenious use of ornaments. Tajik folk songs often use ornaments such as trills and glissandi to enrich the expressiveness of the melody. The work transforms these nationalized ornaments into piano performance techniques, such as adding trills to the key

notes of the melody to simulate the timbre of the Tajik musical instrument "Eagle Flute"; adding chromatic glissandi in the melody progression to restore the "ornamented tone" effect in folk song singing. The use of these ornaments not only retains the charm of national music but also enhances the interest and expressiveness of piano performance. Secondly, the flexible use of variation techniques. The work conducts multiple variations on the core theme, realizing the enrichment and development of the theme by changing elements such as the texture, harmony, and rhythm of the melody. For example, in the first variation, the theme melody is changed from single-note performance by the right hand to alternating performance by the left and right hands, enhancing the sense of layering of the melody; in the second variation, harmonic support of the bass part is added below the theme melody, enriching the sound effect of the work; in the third variation, the theme melody is made more gorgeous and unrestrained through techniques such as ornamentation and expansion, pushing the work to a climax. The use of variation techniques not only avoids the singleness of the original folk song melody but also allows the ethnic charm to be presented in multiple dimensions in different musical contexts. Thirdly, the effective use of sequence techniques. Sequence is the repetition of a melody fragment at different pitch positions, forming the progression and development of the melody. The work uses sequence techniques many times, such as moving the core motif of the theme melody up by a fourth or fifth, which not only maintains the unity of the melody but also enhances the driving force and tension of the music. The use of sequence techniques allows the melody of Tajik folk songs to show a broader expressiveness on the piano, realizing the organic integration of national music and piano art.

Through the preservation and artistic processing of Tajik folk song melodies, "Xinjiang Dance Music" not only adheres to the essential characteristics of national music but also gives full play to the advantages of the piano, allowing the ethnic charm to be accurately and vividly conveyed between the black and white keys of the piano.

## **2.2 Mode Application: Breakthrough and Innovation of Ethnic Characteristic Modes**

Mode is the basic framework of music, and the modal systems of different nations often determine the unique style and charm of music. The modal system of Chinese national music is rich and diverse, which is significantly different from the traditional major and minor scale systems of Western music. In the application of modes, Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music" breaks through the constraints of the traditional major and minor scale systems and adopts modes with Tajik national characteristics, which not only enhances the exotic style of the music but also enriches the modal expressiveness of Chinese piano music, reflecting the innovative thinking of nationalized creation.

**Core Characteristics of Tajik Characteristic Modes**The modal system of Tajik music has distinct national characteristics, and its core is the "combination of pentatonic scale and chromatic notes". Tajik folk songs are mostly based on the pentatonic scale but often incorporate chromatic notes such as #fa and si in the melody progression, forming a unique modal color. This mode is different from the pentatonic scale of Chinese Han music and the major and minor scales of Western music, with a strong Central Asian regional flavor. For example, the "Dorian mode" commonly used in Tajik folk songs takes re as the tonic, and the scale structure is re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do, re. Among them, fa is a natural note and si is raised by a semitone, forming a minor second interval of "mi—fa" and a minor second interval of "si—do". This interval structure endows the music with a unique melancholy and affectionate color. At the same time, the final notes of Tajik modes are mostly mi, la, etc., which is different from the habit of Han music using do and sol as final notes, further strengthening its national characteristics.

**Innovation and Breakthrough in the Application of Modes in the Work**"Xinjiang Dance Music" fully adopts the characteristic modes of the Tajik people, taking re as the tonic, and the scale structure strictly follows the characteristics of the Tajik Dorian mode, retaining the minor second intervals of "mi—fa" and "si—do", and selecting la as the final note, fully reflecting the modal charm of Tajik music. This mode selection breaks the over-reliance on the Han pentatonic scale in the creation of Chinese piano music, expands the scope of application of national modes, and injects new regional cultural elements into piano music. In different sections of the work,

through techniques such as modulation and tonicization, the alternation and integration of Tajik modes with other modes are realized. For example, in the middle section of the work, the Dorian mode is converted to the Lydian mode by raising the fa note, enhancing the brightness and tension of the music; in the ending part, it returns to the Tajik Dorian mode, forming a modal structure of "introduction—development—transition—conclusion", making the music both varied and unified. At the same time, on the basis of the mode, the work uses Western harmonic techniques to provide rich harmonic support for the melody. For example, below the theme melody, triads and seventh chords based on modal scale degrees are added, and the expressiveness of the music is enhanced through changes in harmonic colors. The breakthrough and innovation in modes are important highlights of the nationalized creation of "Xinjiang Dance Music". By applying and innovating Tajik characteristic modes, the work not only retains the unique charm of national music but also enriches the harmonic colors and expressiveness of piano music, providing new ideas for the modal exploration of the nationalization of Chinese piano music.

### **3.The Value and Enlightenment of "Xinjiang Dance Music" in the Nationalized Creation of Piano**

#### **3.1 The Artistic Value of the Work**

As an important achievement of the nationalized creation of contemporary Chinese piano music, Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music" has multi-dimensional artistic value. From the perspective of music creation, the work has successfully realized the in-depth integration of national music materials and piano art. Through the preservation and artistic processing of Tajik folk song melodies, as well as the application and innovation of characteristic modes, the charm of national music has been accurately and vividly presented on the piano, expanding the nationalized expressiveness of the piano. The melody of the work is not only full of strong national characteristics but also has the fluency and expressiveness of piano music; the mode not only adheres to national traditions but also integrates modern composition thinking; the rhythm not only retains the agility of folk dances but also enhances the drama and tension of the music, reflecting a high level of creation.

#### **3.2 Enlightenment for the Nationalized Creation of Piano**

The piano transformation of national music materials is a key link in the nationalized creation of piano. "Xinjiang Dance Music" has provided useful enlightenment by transforming the melodies of Tajik folk songs into piano-expressive musical language through various techniques such as ornaments, variations, and sequences. When conducting transformation, creators should fully consider the instrumental characteristics of the piano, including range, timbre, performance techniques, etc., and use scientific composition techniques to combine the characteristics of national music with the expressiveness of the piano. For example, simulate the timbre and performance effects of national musical instruments through techniques such as chord decomposition, rapid scales, and arpeggios; enrich the sense of layering and sound effects of national music through techniques such as polyphony and harmony; enhance the drama and tension of national music through changes and expansion of rhythms. At the same time, creators should pay attention to innovation, continuously explore new transformation techniques, and expand the nationalized expressiveness of the piano.

The nationalized creation of Chinese piano music requires both adhering to traditions and keeping pace with the times. On the basis of retaining the Tajik music traditions, "Xinjiang Dance Music" integrates modern composition techniques and aesthetic concepts, reflecting a distinct spirit of the times. When conducting creation, creators should establish an open vision, actively draw on modern composition techniques, harmonic language, texture forms, etc., to inject new vitality into national music. At the same time, creators should pay attention to the development of the times, combine national spirit with contemporary themes, and make the works have a strong sense of the times and practical significance. For example, while expressing national culture, integrate reflections on contemporary themes such as family and country feelings, ecological civilization, and the community with a shared future for mankind, so that the works not only have national characteristics but also have universal humanistic value.

#### 4. Conclusion

Zhuang Yao's "Xinjiang Dance Music" takes the music culture of ethnic minorities such as the Tajik people in Xinjiang as the core, realizing the in-depth integration of ethnic charm and piano expression, and becoming a model work of the nationalized creation of Chinese piano music. The work is not only rooted in the soil of national music, extracting core elements such as Tajik dance rhythms and characteristic tones, and constructing a distinct national identity through syncopated rhythms and mixed modes; but also cleverly uses Western piano creation techniques, allowing national music to obtain sufficient expressiveness on the piano, a Western musical instrument, through rich texture layers, harmonic innovation, and musical structure. The composer sublimates folk song materials into piano language, which not only retains the cultural charm of national music but also gives play to the instrumental characteristics of the piano, making the work have both regional characteristics and artistic universality. Its nationalization exploration not only verifies the feasibility of integrating Chinese and Western musical elements but also provides a specific creative paradigm—respecting the original characteristics of national music without being limited to simple imitation, but realizing a breakthrough in artistic expression through technical innovation.

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