

Recording the "Childhood" of Chinese Piano History: A Review of the Piano Journal of the Republic of China

Xiaoning Xiao

School of Language and Culture, Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia.

Abstract

The piano is a Western musical instrument, and after its introduction to China in modern times, it gradually became one of the important instruments in the professional music performance and amateur music life of the Chinese people, given its performance in terms of wide range, diversity of performance, and accompaniment ability. During the Republic of China (1912-1949), the new style of school education introduced piano composition and performance related majors, which laid the foundation for training Chinese piano composers. At the same time, the perennial war in the Republican period affected the consistency of school education and the continuity of piano teaching. However, under such circumstances, there were still many piano composers born, who made great contributions to the modern Chinese piano career, and even the overseas piano composition career. Piano History of the Republic of China is a book that records the piano composers of the Republic of China, which is also the budding stage of Chinese piano history, and it provides historical value for recording the piano compositions of the Republic of China.

Keywords

Piano history; The Piano Journal of the Republic of China; Zhang Yiming.

1. Introduction

In the long river of music history, many musicians, when composing and exploring polyphonic music, must start from the piano score to find the possibility of its internal development of music. However, at this stage, the study of piano works is scarce and often neglected by artists and historians. This situation is no exception in China, especially during the war-torn Republican period. Mr Zhang Yiming, from the dust of history, collected, organised and compiled these disappearing works of art with their creative backgrounds and composers, and created the book "Piano Journal of the Republic of China". Therefore, according to the theme of "Piano Journal of the Republic of China", it is discussed through three aspects, i.e. the introduction of the relevant contents of "Piano Journal of the Republic of China", the main characteristics of the piano composers of the Republic of China, and the academic value of "Piano Journal of the Republic of China", which is aimed at providing more historical value for the development of Chinese piano history.

2. Introduction to the contents of Piano of the Republic of China

The author of "Piano Journal of the Republic of China", Zhang Yiming, who is a doctor of piano performance in the Department of Music of Temple University in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Since 2016 he has played solo recitals at the Central Conservatory of Music, China Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Wuhan Conservatory of Music, Xinghai Conservatory of Music, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, Xi'an Conservatory of Music, Zhejiang Conservatory of Music, Shanxi Grand Theatre, Jiu Ritai Concert Hall in Fuzhou, and other places. In 2017-2018, Zhang

Yiming focused on the study and performance of Chinese piano works from the Republican period (1912-1949). In addition to organising several lecture-concerts on Republican piano works in collaboration with two musicologists in the field, Professor Pu Fang and Professor Liang Maochun, respectively, he also published a monograph, "A Journal of Piano in the Republic of China", and edited "A Collection of Prose Piano Pieces in the Republic of China", with the Hainan Publishing House. The album of Republic of China piano works "In the Woods" recorded for him by China Record Company Beijing Branch has also been released. In 2018, he performed with Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra Cao Guangping's piano concerto "Confucius. Xishi. Ah Q", conducted by Xia Xiaotang. In addition, he performed all 32 of Beethoven's piano sonatas at the Shanghai Concert Hall's Music Afternoon Tea. As an expert on Wang Lizan, Zhang Yiming has recorded the complete piano works of Wang Lizan (three discs, to be released by Naxos), and has collaborated with Shanghai TV to produce a documentary film, "In Search of Wang Lizan". As a music interpreter, Zhang Yiming has also translated and published Cherny's *The Proper Performance of Beethoven's Piano Works*, flutist Graf's *Basic Exercises for Flute*, *Musical Interpretation*, and *The Singing Flute*. His translations and publications include Henri's edition of Beethoven's violin sonatas and Berg's piano sonatas, and Durand's edition of Debussy's piano works.

In recent years, Mr Zhang Yiming has focused on performing and researching piano works from the Republic of China period, which has attracted attention in the steel player circle. When recording the Republic of China piano course, Mr Zhang Yiming prepared a number of manuscripts, which were collated together and became the "Piano Journal of the Republic of China". The Piano Journal of the Republic of China introduces the musical lives of 42 pianist composers of the Republic of China, such as Zhao Yuanren, Xiao Youmei, Huang Bai, He Luting, and so on, and elaborates on their piano works from the perspective of music history. The author calls the Republic of China period as the "golden childhood" of Chinese piano music creation, because of "not knowing the rules", so there are no taboos, indicating that the Republic of China period of piano works in different styles, the characteristics of free and unrestrained, in order to learn the Chopin for the most, the other learn Beethoven, learn Grieg, learn Grieg, learn Grieg, learn Grieg, learn Grieg, learn Beethoven, learn Beethoven, learn Grieg, learn Grieg. The most common style of piano works in the Republican period was Chopin, while others were Beethoven, Grieg, Italian opera style, contemporary style (e.g., atonal and polytonal), Riese style, Chinese and Japanese mixed styles, and ethnic minority styles, as well as national styles. Although slightly naïve compared to the compositions of the following 30 years or so, this childhood was crucial to the development of Chinese piano history. At the same time, Zhang Yiming again sees that beyond the collision between the new, the old, the Chinese, and the foreign, another characteristic of the Republican piano is its intermingling with other arts. Among the composers covered in this book, at least eight had the experience of studying painting in their early years, including Jiang Wenya, Zhao Yuanren, Zhao Xingdao, Chen Tianhe, and so on. This phenomenon may have something to do with the legacy of ancient literati painting and literati music in China. And because of this, although most of the works are short and shallow, they are no less impressive in terms of meaning.

In conclusion, the author of this book is Mr Zhang Yiming, a doctor who stayed in the United States, who, in his spare time for piano playing, became interested in pianists and piano works of the Republic of China period, and after his years of research on piano history-type literature, he has completed this work with painstaking efforts. This book records a total of 42 piano composers in the Republic of China period, and collects and arranges nearly 200 famous examples of piano compositions in the Republic of China, which greatly enriches the research materials on the history of piano in the Republic of China period. The writing style of this book is non-academic, but detailed narrative language writing. The author takes the biographies of the piano composers as the narrative route, recording when and where these composers

created these piano works. Overall, this book has an important research value in enriching the history of Chinese piano composers in the Republican period.

3. Main Characteristics of Republican Piano Composers

The Piano Journal of the Republic of China depicts the appearance of the Chinese piano in that period of history and fills a gap in the history of the Chinese piano. The 42 piano composers recorded in this book were in the era of turmoil between the old and the new, their internal drive to learn the piano was a strong interest in learning, their families were not well off, and their learning process was extremely difficult. But under such difficult conditions, these piano composers overcame the difficulties and devoted their whole life to piano music composition and teaching, creating piano works with a simple nationalistic style. For example, Xiao Youmei, the dean of the faculty of the National Institute of Music in Shanghai, gave up a comfortable life for the sake of professional music education, and finally died at an early age after a long period of labour and illness. Xiao Youmei's piano works include "Nocturne" and "New Nishang Yuyi Song".

Piano composers of the Republic of China, represented by Xiao Youmei, may not be perfect in their piano works, but because of their creations, the piano creations of the Republic of China have become the period of "inquisitive" in the history of Chinese piano. In developmental psychology, the main characteristic of a person's childhood is learning, then, as the "childhood" of Chinese piano creation, the Republican period, the composers' creations are full of the characteristics of a "child's" tenderness and endless "inquisitiveness". The composers of the Republican period were full of "childish" and endless "inquisitiveness" in their compositions.

All the compositions of the pianists in the Republic of China were in a simple nationalistic style. For example, in 1934, Lao Zhicheng's "Shepherd's Music", a familiar piece in the history of modern music, in the competition of "Piano Pieces with Chinese Flavour" financed by Zirpin, was composed in 1932, which is one of the more mature pieces of early Chinese piano music, and the theme of the piece contains four motifs, A, B, C, and D. The A is the scale E-minus. The theme of the piece contains four motives, A, B, C and D. Among them, A is the upward progression of the scale E-F, the F note and the next note are repeated in the same tone and in the same tone line, presenting a sense of pause; B can be regarded as E-F-E, with the effect of pirouette; C has the characteristic of tone echo, while D is the combination of the step upward and the jumping fourth downward, and stays on the long F. The overall melody is downward trend, which is the most mature in the Chinese early piano music. The overall melody has a downward trend, reflecting the layout of the rhythmic relationship between the quiet one and the quiet one, and both B and C and D can well express the pitch organisation relationship of major second + minor third, major second + pure fourth and fifth which are the characteristics of nationalisation. These four basic motifs are fully utilised in the whole piece of "Shepherd's Music" by means of shifting, florid variation, tightening and expanding, reflecting the ethnicity of the melody.

Another example is "The Shepherd's Flute" composed by He Luting, the whole piece is divided into four parts, the first part A is 1-16 bars, the overall structure is presented as an expressive pastoral style, the first four misses are relatively smooth, and then gradually declined, which gives a feeling of natural simplicity, unrestrictedness, smoothness and fluency. The second part B is 17-35 bars, the melody and then maintain the theme of the premise, the same tone and the upper and lower scales using repeated repetition, change of repetition characteristics, is the first part of the music of thought and emotion of the expansion and extension of the music from time to time like a girl is whispering, and at times like a defiant soul in the beating. That is to say, there is eager expectation and inner persistence. The third part of the recapitulation, Part A, consists of 36-43 bars, with the melody gradually proceeding downwards, still maintaining

the pastoral style. The fourth part complements the reproduction of the third part, consisting of six bars, giving a feeling of unfinished business. There are also "Taiwan Maiden" by Taiwan Province composer Chen Siji and "Hunting Song" by Chen Ching-Yin, whose works reveal a lonely and mournful feeling of homesickness. Huang Zhenmao, born in Xiamen, moved to the Philippines as an adult, but his piano works all have a Chinese flavour, such as Lullaby, Chinese Dance and Chinese Love. The Republic of China was a period of turmoil, but it did not kill the national and family sentiments of the piano composers, but rather intensified them.

The Republic of China Piano Journal also records some easily overlooked or controversial piano composers of the Republic of China period. Zhao Yuanren, a familiar linguist, was the first Chinese known to have written works for piano. The author argues for Zhao Yuanren's expertise in piano composition through his experience in the musicology department and the piano works he composed. In the book, he argues, "It is a blessing that Zhao Yuanren (1892-1982) was the first Chinese known to have written keyboard works as well as piano works. His music is exceptionally clean, and he began

His music was particularly clean, and he started out on a very high note. Zhao Yuanren was an amateur composer, but his amateurism was very different from that of the Russian "Power Group". Although the five composers of the "Power Group" had no professional musical training in their early years, they all became real composers later on, whereas Zhao Yuanren was not a professional composer until the end of his career. It is well known that Zhao Yuanren was a linguist... Despite his sideline, he still wrote extremely good and influential music." The Peace March is a musical composition by Cho Won-ren published in the first public issue of Science magazine, Volume I. This work was published in 1915. This march tempo piano piece is in the key of G major and has a meter of 2\2 beats. In terms of the compositional structure of the work, it is a comprehensive juxtaposed trilogy, with the first 1-10 bars as the first part (A), which is rich in musical images and firm. The second part (B) is full of lyrical qualities compared to the first part (A), and continues to move forward on the basis of the original key, but the harmony is extremely unstable. The third part (C) has roughly the same structure as the first part (A) and synthesises the material from A and B in a single movement.

The background to the composition of this musical work is based on the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, when Zhao Yuanren, who was studying philosophy at Harvard, used his piano works to express his longing for a peaceful world. At the same time, he incorporated the national style, as stated in Mr. Zhao Yuanren's Autobiography: "What I focus on is that we have to learn the passing grade in the world of music first, and then add the special flavour of the individual or of China as a contribution of individuality." This shows that Zhao Yuanren's use of Western techniques while incorporating Chinese national styles was a great success.

Another neglected piano composer in music history is the rarely recorded Shen Yangtian. According to the author Zhang Yiming, a piano work signed "Zheshao Shen Yangtian" was published in the Music Magazine, and Zhang Yiming, after finding the score, performed the piano work "Chinese Theatre Pieces Nailed to the Jar" by Shen Yangtian in public. There is also the "politically influenced" piano composer Wu Bochao, about whom a book entitled Wu Bochao's Musical Career, published in 2004, has been controversial in Chinese music history until now. The author affirms Wu's significance as a piano composer in the Republic of China through his 1935 article "A Study of the Harmonious Method of Chinese Music", his piano works such as "Autumn Sensation" and "Thinking of Spring", and his "dramatic death".

Updated information on some of the piano composers. China's famous modern music educator and music theorist Sang Tong, a native of Songjiang County, Shanghai, began to learn to compose songs on his own when he was a student, studied at the Shanghai "National Institute of Music" during the Republic of China period, and then served as a teacher in the Composition Department of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and was appointed as a professor, deputy director of the Department of Music Composition, vice president of the Institute, president of

the Institute, and chairman of the Shanghai Musicians Association in 1980. In 1980, he was appointed professor, deputy director of the composition department, vice president of the institute, president of the institute, and chairman of the Shanghai Musicians Association. Over the past thirty years, he has trained a number of music composers and created a large number of musical works, as well as written academic treatises. Among his works, "Seven Piano Pieces on the Theme of Dongmeng Folk Songs" won the creation award of the World Youth Gala, and "32 Pieces on the Theme of Hmong Folk Songs" and other musical works have been incorporated into the music teaching materials and musical works in art education. In addition, there are "18 Bends of the Yellow River", "Fantasia", "Forest Flowers in Spring" and so on. His books include Sang Tong Harmony Essays, Six Lectures on Harmony, and The Historical Evolution of Chromaticisation. During his studies, his harmony teacher was the Jewish musician Frankl, who was earlier regarded by music historians as a pupil of the modern composer Schoenberg, and so Sang Tong is also regarded as a re-disciple of Schoenberg. According to author Zhang Yiming's documentary evidence, Frankl and Schoenberg did not cross paths, so there is no such thing as a "re-disciple". The famous violinist Ma Sicong, according to the author, Ma Sicong composed a high level piano work "Piano Sonata in B-flat Minor" in the Republic of China period, which became his representative work of piano compositions.

4. Academic Value of The Piano Journal of the Republic of China

"Piano in the Republic of China" introduces the daily life of 42 piano composers and describes their musical works from the perspective of music history. The Republic of China (1912-1949) was a period of revolution and national salvation, and it was also the "childhood period" of piano music creation. Artists of this period were free and free-spirited, with very different styles, and even though many scholars imitated foreign things, they often revealed their "childish" qualities. Studies have shown that this period has not been well covered in Chinese academia and performing arts circles. It is precisely the appearance of this book that makes up for the development of Chinese piano history and clarifies the enlightenment stage of Chinese piano history, which is extremely important for the development of Chinese piano history.

The text of "The Piano Journal of the Republic of China" is slightly colloquial. Ai Qing, a famous poet in China, said in "Poetry Theory": "The most natural language is the spoken language. The most natural language is the spoken word. Write in the spoken word as much as possible, and do as much as possible to make the 'deep man shallow'". Ai Qing believed that this kind of spoken language belongs to life, and it is also the most artistic language, and art can only be enriched by the use of this kind of language. This way of writing is mostly from the author's life experience of the white language, because it is very close to the spoken language, presenting the characteristics of spontaneous, natural and simple words, getting rid of the boundaries of jerky words and awkward words, so that the audience can maintain a comfortable mood. At the same time, this kind of colloquial expression makes short sentences mostly and long sentences less, with simple structure, catchy to say, energy-saving, and easy to remember. In conclusion, readers of The Piano Journal of the Republic of China can read it in the form of a general character account as well as from the perspective of the history of the piano in China at the beginning of the twentieth century, the value of which for historical research should not be ignored. Composers use their works to record their own academic value, and it is of practical significance to understand the composer's life as well as to acquire the composer's works.

The publication of The Piano Journal of the Republic of China fills the historical gap of the piano in the Republic of China period. The book, The Piano Journal of the Republic of China, is a compendium written in character, discussing the short biographies of 42 composers. However, the real intention of this book is not entirely in the wine, the author uses the story of these 42 characters as a starting point, and tries to lay a net, trying to show more of the music world and

the social landscape of the Republic of China period, such as the well-known Ming Dynasty style, the Republic of China qualities, which are common to musicians, literati, politicians, and great scholars. At the same time, the period imagined in people's mind is still different from the real version of the book, and through Mr Zhang Yiming's "Piano in the Republic of China", we can really feel the more real Republic of China style. However, Mr Zhang Yiming's research does not only stop at the classic piano scores such as "Piccolo for Shepherd Boys", but he also describes a series of piano works, composers, and creative backgrounds in the same period of "Piccolo for Shepherd Boys", which is like researching Beethoven, but also Hummel, and Dussek, and so on.

The publication of The Piano Journal of the Republic of China provides authenticity to the development of music in the Republic of China. Most of the musical works mentioned in "The Piano Journal of the Republic of China" are hard to find, and the author has personally stripped down the original versions directly from magazines and newspapers of the Republic of China period in order to explore the authenticity of his musical works. However, sometimes there are ambiguities. As a sheet music translator and musician, Zhang Yiming, with his unique advantage, made the move of retyping his piano scores, and the proofreading and annotations of all the tunes are still relatively reliable.

The publication of The Piano Journal of the Republic of China provides an expanded significance for the history of Chinese musical thought. The piano works of the Republic of China period were in an important period of the intersection of Chinese and Western music. In this special historical stage, a group of musicians represented by Zhao Yuanren integrated and innovated Chinese and Western music, and discussed their musical ideas in Science Magazine. Firstly, the nature of ancient music is to serve for the rule, and it is also the concentrated expression of feudal rule; secondly, music should truly reflect the social situation through its own content, and it should play the role of uplifting the spirit of the nation and uniting the people's power; thirdly, the role of music is to reflect the social situation through its own content, and it should play the role of uplifting the spirit of the nation and uniting the people's power; thirdly, the role of music is to reflect the social situation through the music. Thirdly, the future development of music should be based on the combination of China and the West, but it should not be too westernised, and should have its own national colours. Through the characters involved in the book "Piano of the Republic of China", one can expand one's thoughts through this clue, which provides a basic guarantee for the development of the history of Chinese music thought.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the history of the Chinese piano is only about a hundred years, but in modern times it has gained the recognition and acceptance of the Chinese public, and the spread of the piano cannot be underestimated. At the same time, we should note that this is inseparable from the creation of Chinese piano composers at the beginning of the piano's entry, who made great contributions to the process of nationalising the creation of piano works. The Piano Journal of the Republic of China is a detailed record of the piano composers of the Republic of China, and also records the works of these composers as well as the stories behind the birth of these works.

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