Multidimensional Analysis of the Integration of Chinese and Western Music in Guzheng: A Case Study of "Ding Feng Bo"

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Abstract

Since modern times, the continuous influx of Western musical ideas has had a profound impact on the art of Guzheng, which is not only reflected in performance techniques and work creation, but also in Guzheng education, cultural dissemination, aesthetic concepts, and other aspects. The Guzheng Concerto "Ding Feng Bo", as a modern Guzheng work, not only retains the essence of traditional Chinese music, but also cleverly integrates Western music elements. This article will use three research methods, namely music analysis, case study, and interview, to analyze the creative background, melody structure, performance techniques, and harmony direction of the music itself, explore the application of Chinese and Western music elements in the work, compare two performance cases, analyze the handling methods of two performers and their reflection of the integration of Chinese and Western music, interview guzheng performers, composers, and music scholars to understand their views and interpretations of the integration of Chinese and Western elements in "Ding Feng Bo", interview audiences to understand their acceptance and feelings of the integration of Chinese and Western elements in the work, and discuss how to achieve the integration of Chinese and Western music in the guzheng work "Ding Feng Bo", Explore and understand the new directions and possibilities arising from the fusion of Chinese and Western musical elements in guzheng music, and reveal the cultural significance of this fusion and its implications for modern music creation.

Keywords: Guzheng; Ding Feng Bo "; Integration of Chinese and Western Music

Introduction

The Guzheng Concerto "Ding Feng Bo" was created by the famous young Guzheng performer Mr. Deng Yiqun in 2015. Since its official publication, the work has won the third prize in the "National Excellent Guzheng Music Works Competition" at the Shanghai Graduate Art Academic Forum, thanks to its combination of technical, musical, and humanistic factors. This work is also a representative modern Guzheng concerto and has been selected as a contestant's entry in professional Guzheng competitions such as the China Music Golden Bell Award, CCTV China Instrumental Television Competition, and Wenhua Award.

The title of the work "Dingfengbo" is based on the poem "Dingfengbo · Don't Listen to the Sound of Beating Leaves through the Forest" written by Su Shi, a litterateur in the Northern Song Dynasty, in 1802. The poem uses literary techniques such as synaesthesia, pun, metaphor and contrast to describe a character in a coir raincoat and wearing straw sandals. The composer uses narrative music language and blends Western music colors to showcase the open-minded, heroic, and transcendent attitude expressed in the lyrics through the unique tone and performance techniques of the Guzheng. Through this, they express their optimistic and cheerful outlook on life after encountering setbacks and difficulties.

Research Objectives

Revealing the specific manifestations of the fusion of Chinese and Western elements in "Ding Feng Bo".

Scope of the Research

This study focuses on the performance videos of two performers since the publication of the original work and the self determined controversy in 2015, analyzing their performance videos. In addition, audience interviews will be conducted to understand their acceptance and feelings towards the fusion of Chinese and Western elements in the work after watching the videos.

Research Methodology

1. Literature research method:

Collect and analyze literature related to "Ding Feng Bo", including the composer's creative background, work analysis, and commentary articles. Refer to books, journal articles,dissertations, etc. to understand the research results of predecessors on "Ding Feng Bo".

2. Music analysis method:

A detailed analysis of the melody, harmony, rhythm, and performance techniques of "Ding Feng Bo". Through music score analysis, explore the specific application of Chinese and Western music elements in the work.

3. Case study method:

Select specific segments from "Ding Feng Bo", analyze its melody, harmony, rhythm, and performance techniques, and explore the specific manifestations of the integration of Chinese and Western music. Based on actual performance recordings, analyze the performer's handling methods and their reflection of the integration of Chinese and Western music.

4. Interview method:

Interview the audience to understand their acceptance and feelings towards the integration of Chinese and Western elements in the work.

Research Results

1.Fusion in Music

In the late 1980s, there was a trend in China's cultural circles to promote traditional Chinese studies and culture. In this special social context, artists rooted themselves in tradition and kept up with the times, learning from excellent Western creative concepts and exploring a diversified creative path. Guzheng music also increasingly tended towards the modern music context, and composers created music works belonging to this era in such an environment.

1.1 Integration of tuning and tuning

In the long process of historical development, the number of strings in the Guzheng has varied from few to many. During the Tang and Song dynasties, there were thirteen strings, and later it increased to sixteen, eighteen, twenty-one, and even more strings in the modulated Guzheng The most commonly used instrument at present is the 21 string zither, which provides a good performance space for the zither in the four octave range from high to low. After the 1980s, under the influence of the wave of reform and opening up, cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries have become increasingly widespread. In the collision of Chinese and Western music cultures, the three-dimensional nature of Western music, the richness of sound colors, and the diversity of creative techniques have deeply influenced contemporary Chinese composers. Many works are created by professional composers who use artificial tuning and tuning according to the needs of the works. Artificial mode "is a new mode that is different from traditional modes. It is defined in the" Basic Music Theory Tutorial "as" the

scale mode artificially created by composers in the actual creative process to express the needs of their works, which is called artificial mode "

The tuning scale of "Ding Feng Bo" (Figure 1) conforms to the pentatonic scale tonality of traditional Chinese music, with the C-palace system as the main tone of the work. The 12-21 strings in the middle and low ranges are arranged in a D-E-G-A-C arrangement, setting the tone for the entire piece and preserving the traditional charm of Guzheng music. In the 11-1 string of the high pitched section, the first and seventh strings have been added with a palace change B, and the arrangement has been changed to B-C-D-E-G-A. This changes the mode of the section to a six tone scale, without affecting its main C-palace mode. The addition of two palace change scales makes the modulation technique of the piece more flexible, breaking the traditional "single tone" situation in the work. This creates a tonal change in the internal structure of the work, presenting a richer musical color compared to traditional five tone Guzheng works and providing favorable conditions for the integration of Western music elements.

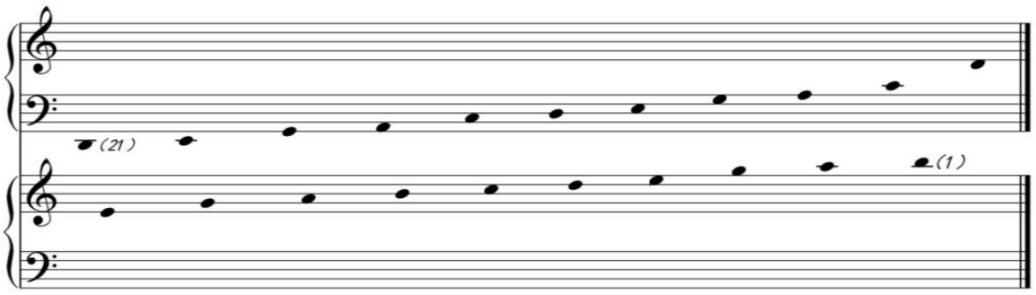

Figure 1

1.2 Integration of Performance Techniques

The traditional Guzheng and piano, as instruments representing the West and the East respectively, have complex and distinctive playing techniques. The complexity of piano playing techniques is reflected in its wide range of keyboards and varied keystrokes. Pianists use different finger techniques to play scales, arpeggios, octaves, whorls, chords, and other techniques to showcase the richness and dynamic changes of music. The complexity of Guzheng playing techniques is reflected in its unique coordination between left and right hands. In Guzheng performance, coordination between the left and right hands is particularly important. The left hand is responsible for pressing the strings on the left side of the zither to change the pitch, while the right hand is responsible for plucking the strings on the right side of the zither to produce sound. The tacit coordination between the two is the key to playing beautiful music.

In terms of performance techniques, "Ding Feng Bo" actively absorbs the performance experience of Western musical instruments such as piano. For example, it borrows the performance techniques of piano and boldly adds the finger sequence technique of piano to the work. The right hand plays the melody lines through finger sequence, while the left hand is responsible for changing the melody pitch according to the strings (Figure 2). It uses a combination of various performance techniques such as kneading and chanting to change the pitch while singing the melody lines.

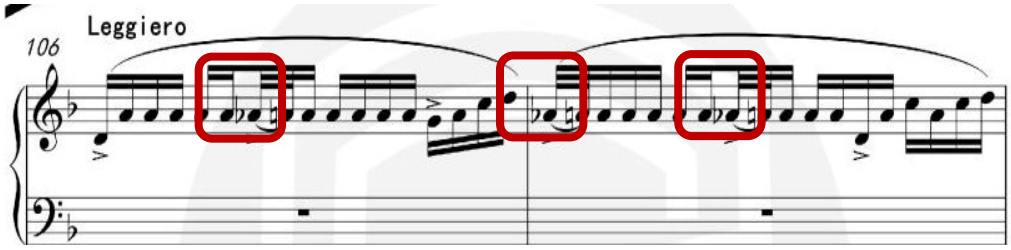

Figure 2

Obviously, this piece of music is no longer confined to the simple techniques of rubbing, chanting, pressing, sliding, and trembling in traditional zither music, but uses composite techniques to combine traditional techniques with Western instrument playing techniques, pioneering the use of left-hand rhyme and right-hand zither singing. This not only develops the playing techniques of the zither, but also enriches the sound color of the zither.

2. Integration in Performance

The author believes that after fully understanding the composer's intention of fusion in creation, only by deeply analyzing the fusion in performance can we better serve the presentation of the work. So, in addition to analyzing the integration of the work itself, it is also necessary to conduct a deep analysis of the character images depicted in the work, which requires the use of the concept of "synesthesia" in music psychology.

Synesthesia is defined in music psychology as the psychological activity in which one sensation triggers another sensation. Excluding the composer's own intention, the notes on the spectrum cannot independently form an auditory and visual sensation and form a synesthetic relationship with the audience. Therefore, the work itself cannot directly convey the story plot of the described object to the audience. This must be achieved through the performer's interpretation of the work and the audience's perception of what they hear and see. In other words, synesthesia plays a mediating role.

The author selected the video version of Deng Yiqun's "Yong" - Young Performer Series Concert in 2024 (Figure 3) and the version of Cheng Haoru's "Ding Feng Bo" performance at Cheng Haoru's Master's Guzheng Graduation Solo Concert in 2018 (Figure 4) as different versions of performance videos for comparison, and conducted a deep analysis of the fusion in performance from the perspective of the audience.



Figure 3



Figure 4

2.1 Visual Dimension

The art of playing Guzheng is presented on stage, bringing the audience a dual sensory experience of auditory and visual senses. In the performance of a piece of music, the performer not only needs solid basic skills, but also appropriate body movements to express the rich emotions and connotations of the work.The author will summarize the fusion differences between the two versions from a visual perspective.

The body language characteristics of Deng Yiqun's performance version: Deng Yiqun's state is natural during performance, and his body language is relatively concise. In the introduction

and slow paced parts, his movements are not exaggerated and just right. Nodding in conjunction with pressing the tone, as if feeling melancholy and lamenting. Entering the small fast-paced, fast-paced, and fast-paced sections, his body movements are smaller, showing his calm and composed state of mind in the fast-paced segments. The rush ended with a scraping sound, and his arm fell slowly after hovering, with his head slightly tilted back, indicating a change in mood. At the end of the Huacai section, he uses his waist to drive the strength of his head and arms, creating a stunning sound effect. In the slow paced reproduction part, his body movements are stretched out, showing a broad-minded and transcendent demeanor after experiencing wind and rain.

The body language characteristics of Cheng Haoru's performance version: Cheng Haoru has strong explosive power when playing, mainly focusing on his arms and head, and can control his body movements freely. In the introduction, her sweeping and scraping movements have a large amplitude, allowing the listener to quickly enter the musical mood. In the slow section, her arm movements are relatively large, using her arms to drive her fingers to play, with clear undulations resembling sighs. The small fast-paced board, fast-paced board, and sharp board parts have strong sweeping power, allowing viewers to feel the fierce wind and rain both auditory and visual. In the colorful part, the sweeping arm movements are clean and sharp, and the breathing is short yet powerful. The processing of the slow board reproduction part has a certain degree of relaxation, and compared to the previous slow board part, the amplitude of the action has been reduced, reflecting transparency and calmness.

Overall, Deng Yiqun's performance focuses more on expressing the original emotional intention of the work, with relatively concise and direct use of body language and techniques, emphasizing the logical and expressive power of the music itself; Cheng Haoru incorporates more Western music elements on the basis of the original song's artistic conception, with rich and exaggerated body language and more personalized and expressive techniques, allowing the audience to feel a stronger emotional impact both visually and auditory.

2.2 Auditory Dimension

Deng Yiqun's performance version is based on the score and lasts for 13 minutes and 35 seconds. Cheng Haoru's performance version is basically consistent with the original score in terms of paragraph arrangement, with only modifications made to the ending section, replacing sections 207-216 with sections 60-74 of the slow tempo, increasing the volume of the ending section, and extending the performance time to 13 minutes and 40 seconds. The two performers have different speed controls for each section (Figure 5), reflecting their different perceptions and interpretations of the music.

		Deng Yiqun	Cheng Haoru
Time		2024.05.05	2018.05.20
Location		Wuxi grand theatre	Central Conservatory of Music
Combination		Guzheng and Ethnic Orchestra	Guzheng and Piano
Duration		13' 35"	13' 40"
Segment Duration	Introduzione	2' 33"	2' 54"
	Lento	3' 19"	3' 14"
	Rubato	38"	41"
	Allegretto	1' 20"	1' 14"

	Allergo	23"	25"
	Presto	50"	52"
	Largo	30"	32"
	Cadenza	1' 20"	1' 33"
	Lento	52"	45"
	Coda	1' 50"	1' 30"

Figure 5

From an auditory perspective, Deng Yiqun's performance version has a more rational processing of speed, basically playing according to the timing and rhythm of the notes on the sheet, and the speed of each section is precisely controlled by him. Cheng Haoru's performance version speed processing has its personalized aspect. In the introduction, Deng Yiqun's speed processing is slightly slower, and there is appropriate blank space between musical phrases, expressing the introduction with free rhythm and flexible speed clearly and cleanly. Cheng Haoru played the version at a slightly faster speed, and made appropriate adjustments while maintaining the original score style. In the 13th bar, she changed the four note group in the bass region to play with her left hand in the disordered tone region on the left side of the zither code, which to some extent shortened the duration of the introduction.

In Rubato, the speed processing of Deng Yiqun's version is slightly faster than that of Cheng Haoru's version. The different levels of speed in the slow board advance significantly and are relatively compact, making the smooth slow board flow. The starting speed of Cheng Haoru's version is slightly slower, the melody lines are smooth, the tone is long, and the glissando is gradually slowed down. The delicate emotional processing shows a sad mood.

In Allegretto, the starting speed of Deng Yiqun's version is 160 beats per minute, which is slightly delayed and focuses on expressing sadness and emotions. In the first beat of the 62nd section, Deng Yiqun's version played as a gentle rolling of the strings, without emphasizing it, while Cheng Haoru's version played as a glide, extending the rhythm. In the 77-78 sections of the scattered board, Deng Yiqun played a version with fast vibrato speed, large amplitude, and average frequency after sliding up. The vibrato in Cheng Haoru's version is rich in variation, with the amplitude of the vibrato after sliding up increasing from deep to shallow and the frequency increasing from sparse to dense.

From this, it can be seen that as a composer, Deng Yiqun's performance pays more attention to the expression of the original emotional intention of the work, and the fusion of Chinese and Western music is reflected in the precise combination of traditional guzheng techniques and modern harmony. For example, in the introduction, the combination of piano and guzheng is natural and smooth, showcasing the harmonious unity of Chinese and Western instruments. Cheng Haoru's performance is more dramatic in terms of the fusion of Chinese and Western music, combining the expressive power of Western modern music with the traditional charm of the guzheng through exaggerated changes in intensity and rich tone processing. For example, in the fast-paced section, a strong visual effect of wind and rain is created through intense contrast and rapid scraping techniques.

3. Visual Fusion

The visual effect of the stage plays a driving role in the narrative presentation of music performance. Mainly reflected in stage design, costumes, scenery, lighting, and other aspects, these stage effects enhance the expressive and appreciative power of music performance, making it easier for the audience to immerse themselves in the narrative atmosphere created by

the performer. The two video versions compared in this article are mainly analyzed and compared in terms of costumes, band composition, and performance venues.

3.1 Costume

The performance costumes on stage not only add visual effects, but also help performers better convey emotions and tell stories, completing the shaping of musical images.

From the performance costumes of the two performers (Figures 6-7), Deng Yiqun wore a white standing collar buckle Zhongshan suit during the solo concert, and embroidered the designed pattern on the fabric with embroidery under the collar. The style incorporates a lot of Chinese elements. The term 'white' precisely corresponds to the poet Su Shi's indifferent attitude towards fame and fortune, and also has a certain degree of coherence in the narrative plot of the music.

Cheng Haoru wore a blue sleeveless chiffon gown during her master's graduation concert performance. The upper body of the gown was layered according to the thickness of the chiffon and decorated with rhinestones and pearls. Blue "is a cool color tone, echoing the clear blue sky after the thunderstorm and haze dissipate in the poem.



Figure 6

From the overall stage effect, whether it is piano accompaniment or band accompaniment, the accompanists all use dark tones in their costumes, and Deng Yiqun's white performance costume and Cheng Haoru's blue performance costume are both highlighted, so the overall stage effect is clear and layered (Figure 7).



Figure 7

3.2 Band Composition

In Cheng Haoru's master's graduation concert, she used a piano as accompaniment for "Ding Feng Bo", placing the piano and guzheng in the center position. This concise layout focused the audience's attention on the performer and the music itself. The interaction between the piano

and the soloist is intimate and intuitive, allowing the audience to clearly see every movement and expression of the performer, enhancing the infectious power of the music.

In Deng Yiqun's series of concerts for young musicians, he used a large orchestra as accompaniment for "Ding Feng Bo". The stage accompanied by a large orchestra usually requires a large space to accommodate numerous instruments and performers, with each instrument group distributed in different positions, forming a clear visual effect. This grand lineup and rich visual layers not only enhance the symphonic nature of the music, but also create a spectacular visual impact. During the performance, the playing movements and expressions of each instrument group are rich and diverse, creating a dynamic stage effect that makes the audience feel as if they are immersed in a sea of music.

From a visual perspective, piano accompaniment and orchestral accompaniment each have their own unique visual effects. Cheng Haoru chose a simple and focused stage layout with piano accompaniment, making it easier for the audience to focus on the performer and the music itself, creating a warm and delicate atmosphere, suitable for small-scale performances as a master's solo concert. Deng Yiqun's stage, accompanied by a large orchestra, presents a grand and rich visual level. Through a grand lineup and dynamic stage effects, it creates a spectacular visual impact, suitable for large-scale performances that combine a single instrument with symphonies. Both performers achieved the best stage visual effect and musical expression based on the style, emotional needs, and specific circumstances of the performance.

Discussion

The work is inspired by Su Shi's poem "Ding Feng Bo" and combines traditional Chinese culture with modern Western music techniques. This cultural fusion not only enriches the artistic connotation of the works, but also reflects the composer's inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture. Traditional guzheng works mainly focus on depicting natural landscapes or traditional emotions, while "Ding Feng Bo" uses a combination of Chinese and Western techniques to better express complex emotions and modern artistic conception. Various special sound simulation techniques are used in the works, such as the arpeggios of the two hand sixteenth note in the rapid board imitating the scene of pouring rain, and techniques such as sweeping, sweeping strings, and scraping the disordered sound area on the left side of the zheng code to simulate the strong atmosphere of wind and rain. The use of these sound effects makes the work more visually appealing and infectious to the ear.

The poem 'Ding Feng Bo' not only showcases Su Shi's broad mindedness and composure in music, but also conveys the composer's own state of mind when facing difficulties through music. The depth and authenticity of this emotional expression make the work more artistically infectious and thought-provoking. In terms of musical expression, the work combines the artistic conception of traditional Chinese music with the emotional expression of Western music, showcasing Su Shi's open-minded and composed attitude towards life when facing difficulties through music. This expression not only reflects the connotation of traditional Chinese culture, but also meets the emotional needs of modern people.

These feelings reflect the unique charm of the fusion of Chinese and Western elements, emotional expression, and performance techniques in "Ding Feng Bo", as well as the personalized understanding and resonance of different audiences towards the musical works.

Conclusion

From this, it can be seen that "Ding Feng Bo" showcases cultural diversity and inclusiveness through the integration of Chinese and Western music. This integration not only enriches the forms of musical expression, but also promotes cultural exchange and dialogue between the East and the West. The success of this song provides an important enlightenment for modern

music creation: on the basis of inheriting the tradition, we can boldly absorb the essence of foreign culture, so that we can not only create works with a sense of the times, but also promote the innovation and development of music art.

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