

Analysis of Piano Composition for “*The Sound of Waves*”

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Abstract:

Wang Lisan, born in Sichuan in 1933, was a famous composer in China in the 1980s. Mr. Wang Lisan has been very fond of traditional Chinese culture since childhood. In 1954, he was admitted to the Composition Department of Shanghai Conservatory of Music and officially studied composition. After graduation, he served as the Dean and Professor of the Art School of Harbin Normal University, and has been engaged in music teaching and piano composition for a long time. “*The Sound of Waves*” is one of the representative piano pieces created by Mr. Wang Lisan in the early 1980s. In his work “*The Sound of Waves*”, Wang Lisan boldly used techniques that composers at the time dared not use, using pentatonic scales to collide with Japanese modes. His creative techniques became increasingly mature, and his works perfectly reflected the integration of Chinese and Western music cultures. His piano piece “*The Sound of Waves*” was also vividly portrayed.

Keywords:

Wang Lisan, “*The Sound of Waves*”, Chinese 20th Century Music

1. The Artistic Background of Piano Music “*The Sound of Waves*”

Mr. Wang Lisan has composed nine piano pieces, each with its own unique characteristics. “*The Sound of the Waves*” is one of Mr. Wang Lisan’s piano suites “*The Painting of Dongshan Kuiyi*”. The entire suite is a model of Mr. Wang Lisan’s creation, with unique creative techniques, and modern techniques have already been used in this suite. “*The Sound of Waves*” is the fourth piece of this suite, which is more diverse and majestic compared to the previous three prime ministers. This is also the core theme of this suite. This suite consists of four movements in total: the first movement “*Winter Flowers*”, the second movement “*Forest Autumn Clothes*”, the third movement “*Lake*”, and the fourth movement “*Waves*”. The names of these four movements were obtained by Mr. Wang Lisan’s observation of the four paintings of Dongshan Kuiyi. Mr. Wang Lisan also carefully wrote a poem for each movement, which added artistic value to the suite in front of the movement title, attracting people’s attention, Striving to express one’s impression of the artwork through musical descriptions, emphasizing a new artistic conception rather than focusing on how to depict the scenery, this suite won first prize at the Fourth National Music

Works Awards in 1985. “*The Sound of Waves*” is the most important piece of the suite, which is a special symphonic poem with a distinct style, and the author also focuses on the fourth movement. In terms of content, Mr. Wang Lisan’s first three pieces were all about appreciating the scenery of Japan and describing it from different perspectives. However, the piano piece “The Sound of the Waves” clearly praises and describes the spirit of “people”, but its practical significance and connotation greatly exceed the most ordinary description of the scenery; From the perspective of music style, the three pieces “*Winter Flower*”, “*Forest Autumn Clothes*”, and “*Lake*” are basically based on the special style of Japanese music. In the final piece “*The Sound of Waves*”, the special style is changed, and this work has a distinct Chinese style as a whole.

Mr. Wang Lisan is a renowned contemporary music educator, music theorist, and composer. Born in 1933 in Jianwei County, Sichuan Province, in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, he came from a scholarly family. His father was a person who was very fond of traditional ethnic music and traditional theatrical music. Influenced by his father, Mr. Wang Lisan received a good education from a young age and had a strong interest in Western music, art and literature. Later, he studied piano and violin at Sichuan Art College, And achieved very good results. In 1951, Mr. Wang Lisan applied to Shanghai Conservatory of Music and chose the Composition Department. Teachers such as He Luting and Sang Tong had a very important influence on Mr. Wang Lisan, which allowed him to start exploring music in depth, especially piano music. When Mr. Wang Lisan was still studying at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, he composed the piano solo piece “*Blue Flower*” based on Shaanxi folk songs. The creative style of this piece is very innovative, fresh and refined, and it has a strong national flavor. In this piano piece, Mr. Wang Lisan's creative talent is highlighted, and it has attracted the attention of the music and composition circles. Mr. Wang Lisan’s greatest contribution to music is piano music, and his contribution is indelible. Of course, Mr. Wang Lisan is not only an excellent music educator, theorist, and composer. From a young age, Wang Lisan has also been very fond of painting. The suite “The Artistic Meaning of Dongshan Kuiyi” was created by Mr. Wang Lisan because of his love for painting, which allowed him to pay attention to the paintings of contemporary Japanese painter Dongshan Kuiyi. This suite can be said to be a high degree of integration of painting and music. Subsequently, in 1959, Mr. Wang Lisan was sent to Beidahuang for renovation and created works such as “*Beidahuang Girl*”. In 1979, he was elected as a director of the China Musicians Association. In 1985, he was elected as the Executive Director of the Chinese Musicians Association. In 1986, Mr. Wang Lisan created many famous piano pieces and was also appointed as the Dean of the School of Art at Harbin Normal University. Famous works such as “*Brothers and Sisters Pioneering*”, “*The Meeting of Errenzhuan*”, and “*Ta Shan Ji*” were created by Mr. Wang Lisan during this period. Among them, “*Ta Shan Ji*” is a representative work of polyphonic works. Although Wang Lisan has been influenced by some modernization, in his works, both the form and content perfectly reflect the national color. Many of his works are also based on Chinese folk songs, and in some modes, he also uses ethnic modes such as pentatonic. Mr. Wang Lisan’s creation perfectly prioritized national music and the spirit of traditional Chinese culture, making him a model of music creation at that time.

2. Specific Analysis of Piano Music “*The Sound of Waves*”

2.1. Analysis of Harmony and Texture in Piano Music “*The Sound of Waves*”

During Mr. Wang Lisan's more than fifty year creative period, each work has different characteristics in the application of harmonic techniques. Mr. Wang Lisan boldly attempts to combine traditional pentatonic modes with modern Western harmonic techniques in his creations.

a. The significance of harmony mainly lies in obeying the needs of color, and the selection of harmony and the standardization of chord structure are secondary, mainly the selection of harmony color.

b. Mr. Wang Lisan applied Japanese characteristics based on the style of his work, combining pentatonic and Japanese tonal modes, and using innovative ideas in harmony, with different harmonic colors. Mr. Wang Lisan mainly used the tonal mode of the E-tonic in "*The Sound of Waves*", with a more diverse arrangement of scales and a very strong Japanese style.

c. The work "*The Sound of Waves*" incorporates musical elements from Chinese Buddhism.

2.2. Analysis of the Form of Piano Music "*The Sound of Waves*"

Below is an analysis of the musical structure of this piano piece:

This song is a reproduction of a single trilogy with an introduction connection and an ending.

Structure	Introduction	A	Connect	A1	Connect	A2	Connect	End
Section	1-17	18-31	32-38	39-56	57-76	77-105	106-112	113-127
Theme	Jianzhen Theme	The sound of the waves		The sound of the waves		The sound of the waves	Cadenza	Ascending the Palace Theme

Introduction: Bringing people a sense of solemnity and awe. After 5 bars, the continuous octave intervals, from strong to weak, are highly mysterious. At the end of the first section, the work employs a large number of triplets, making the texture more compact. The sound area gradually unfolds and the speed gradually increases, creating a tense and uneasy environment. The low notes end with a nine beat long note, and a large jump at the end leads to the low notes.

Paragraph A: Sections 18-31. This paragraph uses the Japanese tokusatsu mode. In the two bars of 18-19, the melodic voice begins with a large number of hexaplots, starting with an empty beat of a sixteenth note, followed by a great leap of a fourth and entering the descending scale. The low voice uses a triplet with wavy lines, while the left voice uses a fixed bass octave D to introduce the texture, depicting the ocean and waves. Starting from the 20th bar, the pitch of the six connected notes in the melodic voice part continues to rise, depicting the waves and undulations of the sea. Starting from the 26th bar, the melodic voice part is a repetition in the front, and the bass voice part changes from a single note to a double note, with thicker texture. Starting from the 30th bar, the melodic voice part begins to decrease, reaching A in the small word group.

Connection section: Sections 32-38, transitioning naturally from the first theme to the second theme. The fixed bass D becomes^{#F}, and an octave group begins to appear in the 35th bar, creating even stronger emotions.

Paragraph A1: Sections 39-56. The texture form is somewhat similar to section A, but the melody part of this section has a larger span, and the bass part is fixed to a # C note.

Connection section: Sections 57-76. The introduction of new rhythmic patterns.

Paragraph A2: Sections 77-103. Starting to move on to the theme of authenticity appreciation, the melodic voice is still mainly composed of six connected notes, and the low voice is still mainly composed of three connected notes. However, the most intense and tense of all themes has undergone a change in the tonality of the entire section, becoming a frequent semi tone relationship and modulation, and is supplemented by materials from the first two themes.

Connection section: Sections 106-112.

Conclusion: Sections 113-127. The theme of this section is the climax of the entire piece, with the melody voice selected from the first section of the Buddhist music "Ascending the Treasure Hall" as the material. The high pitched voice uses chords of the fourth, fifth, and eighth degrees to play the theme of this section, while the low pitched voice imitates drum sound on the D note, complementing the upper voice and creating a lingering melody.

3. The Aesthetic Connotation and Artistic Value of Piano Music "*The Sound of Waves*"

The piano piece "*The Sound of Waves*" is based on the painting of Kuiyi Dongshan, and its sound and painting share the same origin, indicating that although music and painting are two different types of art, they also belong to the same category of art. A musical work is composed of elements such as harmony, rhythm, mode, melody, and melody.

In "*The Sound of Waves*", we can see painting in music and view this work with an aesthetic perspective.

a: In the melody, in the theme of Jianzhen Crossing the Sea, the high voice part continues to move forward with a sextuple of sixteenth notes. Overall, the melody lines are constantly undulating up and down, like the waves of the sea. The low voice part jumps in with large spans, like waves and flowers. Mr. Wang Lisan combines music with reality, allowing us to feel the artistic beauty of his works.

b. In harmony, Mr. Wang Lisan boldly combined different modes and made clever ideas in the color of harmony. The theme of crossing the sea has appeared three times, adopting a constantly changing Japanese metropolitan tone, showcasing Japan's landscape and scenery. The intensity and emotions gradually strengthen, with a strong Japanese style. On the chords, the stacking of chords is used to represent the sound of bells and drums, blending music and painting to achieve an artistic effect of combining sound and painting.

The piano piece created by Mr. Wang Lisan, although inspired by paintings, has undergone different interpretations and sublimations to a certain extent. It not only expresses the sincere deeds of the authenticity expert who sailed eastward and overcame hardships, but also demonstrates the deep friendship between the Chinese people and the Japanese people. "*The Sound of Waves*" not only retains the creative style of our traditional music, but also opens up a new direction for piano music creation in China. After listening to this, Mr. Kuiyi Dongshan wrote in his letter,

“You have a deep understanding of my work, which is admirable.” In the creation of “*The Sound of Waves*,” Mr. Wang Lisan consciously expressed traditional Chinese culture and Japanese music culture, and had a very deep research on folk modes, with flexible and clever application. He still maintains this habit in his more than thirty years of creation, The work has very high artistic value and is worthy of performance and analysis by music enthusiasts.

4. Conclusions

Chinese piano works have gone through hundreds of years of development, but currently the quantity is not very large, and the quality is even rarer. Therefore, creating piano works that meet people’s aesthetic concepts is particularly important. We not only need to break traditional creative concepts, but also absorb modern Western composition techniques, integrate the two and apply them to our piano works. Mr. Wang Lisan perfectly applied the two together. He not only has extensive research on traditional Chinese folk music, but also has a high level of expertise in Japanese tonality. The piano piece “The Sound of Waves” is not only based on the style of traditional Chinese ethnic music, but also strives for modernization, constantly exploring new horizons, and perfectly integrating poetry, painting, and music, it is a classic work of piano music in China.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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