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МУЗИЧНА ТА ХОРЕОГРАФІЧНА ОСВІТА В КОНТЕКСТІ КУЛЬТУРНОГО РОЗВИТКУ СУСПІЛЬСТВА

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Рецензенти:

Мартинюк Тетяна Володимирівна, доктор мистецтвознавства, професор,
завідувач кафедри-професор кафедри мистецьких дисциплін і методик
навчання Університету Григорія Сковороди в Переяславі;

Білова Наталія Костянтинівна, кандидат педагогічних наук, професор,
професор кафедри теоретичної, музично-інструментальної та вокальної
підготовки, Державний заклад «Південноукраїнський національний
педагогічний університет імені К. Д. Ушинського».

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Технічний редактор Ірина ЛЕВИЦЬКА



2. Fischer-Dieskau D. 1988. Nachklang - Ansichten und Erinnerungen. Stuttgart : DVA Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt. 320 p.

Hu YI,

Master's Degree Student, (Second Level of Higher Education), South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky

Oksana GOROZHANKINA

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky

Ху Й,

здобувач другого (магістерського) рівня вищої освіти, ДЗ «Південноукраїнський національний педагогічний університет імені К. Д. Ушинського»

Оксана ГОРОЖАНКІНА,

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, ДЗ «Південноукраїнський національний педагогічний університет імені К. Д. Ушинського»

THE GENRE OF PIANO MINIATURE IN THE WORKS OF ZHANG SHUAI

Анотація. У статті досліджено особливості жанру фортепіанної мініатюри на прикладі творчості сучасного китайського композитора Чжана Шуая. Проаналізовано тенденції розвитку китайської фортепіанної музики, що характеризуються асиміляцією західного досвіду та пошуком індивідуальної інтерпретації національних витоків.

Ключові слова: фортепіанна мініатюра, китайська фортепіанна музика, Чжан Шуай, «Три прелюдії», синтез культур.

In the piano compositions of Chinese composers, tendencies traditional for any culture emerge: on the one hand, a desire for the assimilation of Western experience, and on the other, a search for an individual interpretation of traditional national roots. Research into the relationship with the Western, American, or European tradition allows Chinese piano culture to be viewed in a global context, as an aspect of dialogue with the music of other countries and the search for ways to interact with other traditions.



A significant number of scholarly works are dedicated to the problems of Chinese piano music development, focusing on clarifying the figurative content of piano works (Lu Jie, Qin Tian), the specifics of the development of a particular piano genre (Yang Tuo, Zhao Yue, Yan Zhihao), the interaction of genre and performance stylistics in the piano works of Chinese composers (Sun Meixuan), and the characteristics of the work of a specific composer (Sun Tian). The modal features of Chinese piano music have been researched in the works of O. Yeromenko, and the problems of piano performance art have been addressed in the works of V. Moskalenko, Yu. Nikolaevska, M. Cherniavska, and others.

Chinese piano music evokes significant interest among musicians and a wide audience both within the country and beyond its borders. However, the insufficient depth of performance analysis of works by Chinese composers across various genres significantly complicates their profound comprehension and full-fledged concert realization. This highlights the issue of the interconnectedness of genre and performance stylistics, which encompasses the entire range of problems: from the interpretation of the figurative realm and technological aspects to ensuring the genre-stylistic authenticity of the performance.

In musical culture, the miniature is defined as a specific genre, "historically established on the basis of small forms, intended for various performing ensembles (instrumental, vocal, choral, orchestral, mixed) and types of music-making (chamber, concert, everyday), characterized by the momentary, 'fleeting' existence of the subject of creativity (author – lyrical hero – performer – listener) within the framework of chamber spacetime" [2, p. 165]. According to N. Riabukha, the foundation of the piano miniature "is a simple one-part form composition, as well as a simple two- or three-part form, where the artistic image of the work is presented immediately in the process of its emergence" [2]. The piano miniature genre attracted the attention of Chinese composers due to its artistic freedom and non-formalized nature. In the early stages of the formation of the Chinese piano school, due to the lack of its own experience in this genre, the works of many composers directly followed the stylistics of European compositions. Chinese authors who were mastering a new instrument (the piano) were particularly drawn to the miniature, specifically the prelude, as it is characterized by a flexible formal structure, construction based on a single textural formula, and a relatively small volume. Canonical piano preludes by European masters significantly influenced Chinese authors, especially concerning harmony and formal construction. The first preludes, created by Chen Tianhe and Ding Shande in the 1930s–1940s, "are considered experimental attempts that explore Chinese national elements mixed with Western compositional techniques" [3, 28].

Let us examine the development of the piano miniature genre through the work of the contemporary Chinese composer Zhang Shuai. His "Three Preludes for Piano" Op. 18 deserve special attention, as they vividly demonstrate the synthesis of national and Western traditions. Zhang Shuai was born in 1979 into a musical family in Shenyang. He received a thorough education: he studied composition at the



Shenyang Conservatory of Music (with professors Fang Zhiming and Cao Jiayun), and later continued his studies in the postgraduate program at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where he received his doctoral degree in 2008 and later teaches composition as a professor at the conservatory. Zhang Shuai works in various styles and genres. He is the author of piano works, concertos for violin and oboe, orchestral suites, songs, and film music. His music is extremely innovative in terms of musical concepts. In search of his own style, the composer explored jazz, rock, and pop music, combining their elements with Western compositional techniques and the Chinese musical language.

The cycle "Three Preludes" (created in 1998 during his studies) is a programmatic work that reflects Zhang Shuai's compositional philosophy and meets the requirement for the intelligibility of new music. These preludes demonstrate the trend toward the assimilation of Western musical traditions. According to Liao Moia, "their title and stylistic features appeal to the experience of jazz music, and particularly to the famous 'Three Preludes' by G. Gershwin" [1, p. 38], which is evidenced by the rhythmic pattern, the harmony of the pieces, and even their form. Such a combination was very unusual for the Chinese audience, but the work quickly became one of the most performed works by Chinese pianists and achieved great success. Wang Yong notes that in this work, the composer attempts to convey the spirit of the younger generation, through the use of polytonal combinations of major and minor chords, the blend of pentatonic modes and jazz elements [4]. The cycle consists of three contrasting pieces – "Conflict," "Mysticism," and "Youth Power" – which are contrasting in imagery, tempo, and stylistics, but together they create a unified, holistic dramatic composition. In this work, Zhang Shuai embodies the idea of a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures, where the images of the East are represented by traditional roots, and the West is associated with modernity.

The first prelude, "Conflict," begins with a quiet (*piano*) sound, against which a pentatonic motif is born, symbolizing the image of the East. The tranquility of meditation is shattered by a burst of jazz rhythm and a rapid chromatic movement of quartal structures (*Allegro appassionato*), marking the emergence of a new image – the symbol of the West. Through the means of musical expression used, the composer conveys the image of a young person – a rebel who has many questions about life.

The general mood of the miniature "Mysticism" is marked by mystery and spectrality (*Mesto, Misterioso*). This creates direct associations with the misty lowlands often depicted in classic Chinese painting (*shan-shui* landscapes). In the culminating phase of thematic development, Zhang Shuai gives the performer freedom to express their imagination in an improvisational "cadenza" (as indicated by the remark "repeat freely"). This is an innovative step, as such a technique is rarely encountered in Chinese piano works. The sudden pulsating sound, the rapid acceleration of tempo, and the compression of rhythmic space using the *attacca* technique serve as a transition to the third prelude – "Youth Power." This prelude embodies the strong, bright, rebellious spirit of youth, which is emphasized by the



author's markings "estemporale impetuoso" (improvisational, impulsive, intense character). The final part of the cycle is an original fantasy that, borrowing the main thematic material from the first two preludes, functions as a dynamized recapitulation of the entire cycle.

Thus, due to its vivid expressive imagery, Zhang Shuai's cycle "Three Preludes" has rightfully become one of the best works of Chinese piano music, combining a dialogue between Eastern traditional culture and Western innovations. The bold creative attempt by a representative of the younger generation of Chinese composers in the field of the piano miniature received high recognition: in 2002, the work was awarded the prestigious national "Golden Bell" award, confirming its significance for the development of modern musical culture.

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Si Huakun	
The genre of transcription in music within the context of academic integrity.....	146
Агафонова Н.	
Темброва палітра як засіб художньої виразності у хоровому мистецтві.....	149
Чжао Шуран, Ключєва С.	
Естетика хореографічного тексту сучасного танцювального мистецтва.....	151
Ткачук О.	
Сучасний балет як засіб емоційного відгуку на актуальні світові події (на прикладі балету «Flight Pattern» Кристал Пайт).....	153
Luo Zhenwei, Stepanova L.	
Chamber and vocal music in the concert repertoire of Chinese singers.....	158
Лю Юйсюань, Ашихміна Н.	
Китайська «чайна» опера Хуанмейсі.....	161
Wu Chenxi, Stepanova L.	
The problem of performing interpretation of vocal cycles.....	163
Hu Yi, Gorozhankina O.	
The genre of piano miniature in the works of Zhang Shuai.....	166
Чжан Цзицін, Вороновська О.	
The interrelationship between melody and word in Chinese vocal art.....	170
Dobrova H.	
«Compositional concept of a choreographic production» as a phenomenon and a scientific notion.....	172
У Менцзи	
Інтерпретаційно-виконавські аспекти камерних вокальних творів китайських композиторів.....	175
Liang Ziwen	
Interpretive specificity of chamber and vocal lyrics by A. Kos-Anatolsky in the executive dimension.....	177
Farmahei M.	
Creation of a visual (stage) concept for the choreographic production "The artist" with the involvement of artificial intelligence.....	181
Лещенко І.	
Художні засоби вираження страху у хореографії.....	183
Zhou Zhijie	
Declamatoriness as a means of vocal-performance expressiveness.....	187
Ян Шо, Ключєва С.	
Роль народно-пісенних традицій у становленні професійної вокальної школи України та Китаю.....	191