

## Research on Western Classical Piano Performance Based on the Perspective of Hermeneutics

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### Abstract

In recent years, domestic scholars have further explored the interpretation of Western classical piano, and they focused on the musical works, as well as the theoretical significance of the methodology, arguing that the understanding and expression of the piano score is of great significance in the study of piano performance. Therefore, this paper takes Western classical piano performance as the research object, explains the performance of Western classical music based on the hermeneutic philosophy of music, and explores how to find the best way to perform in the secondary creation of piano performance by more closely fitting the creative intention and emotional expression of classical composers. This paper presents the development and evolution of hermeneutics in the field of music performance from the perspective of hermeneutics.

The study of Western classical piano performance requires specific attention to first, it is necessary to sort out the academic background and development of hermeneutics, second, it is necessary to interpret the music texts of the classical Western piano's classical repertoire in terms of specific compositional structure and third, there is a need to explore the meaning and influence of contemporary piano performance, an issue that would involve, to some extent, the question of the shape of Western classical music. The western classical piano performance from the perspective of hermeneutics, including the form of western classical music, the characteristics of piano performance and the analysis of performance. We analyze the characteristics of classical piano music forms from the perspective of hermeneutics, such as the performance style, effects, and stylistic features of classical piano. In the performance of piano works, "scales" and "arpeggios" are not only an important cornerstone of the piano playing technique in the classical music period, but also the core of the whole piano music works.

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## Introduction

“Hermeneutics” is divided into “modern hermeneutics” and “contemporary hermeneutics”, the former is represented by Schleiermacher and Dilthey, while the latter is represented by Heidegger and Gadamer. Because of the historical and subjective nature of understanding, Gadamer proposed that the study of musical works must be based on a new vision of the interplay between the comprehender and the comprehended object, i.e., the concept of “The Fusion of Horizons.” That is to say, it integrates the “Foresight” of the comprehender and the “Horizon” of the comprehended understood object, and is the product of the fusion of these two concepts. Western scholars such as Gadamer and Kretschmar and domestic scholars such as Yu Runyang also believe that it is not enough to know the score alone to interpret the meaning of a musical work; the meaning outside the score also needs to be explored by the performers and the appreciators. Music is not a random sound game, but a meaningful form. Hermeneutics also has different contents and forms in different fields. In classical piano performance, it has become the focus of scholars’ attention to understand the composer’s intention of composition, to explain the meaning of the work and to reproduce its spirit.

Domestic research scholars continue to delve deeper into the existing musical works inherent in the methodology of theoretical significance in addition to new research ideas. At the same time, in the process of analyzing and researching musical performances, they believe that understanding and interpreting musical performances is also a task that cannot be ignored. In recent years, research and interpretation in the category of music performance has also been more productive.

This selection is based on the study of Western classical piano performance, and is a theoretical analysis and study of Western classical piano research from the perspective of hermeneutics. The main aspects of the research include the form of Western classical music in the context of the hermeneutic perspective, the characteristics of piano performance, and the analysis of the performance of works. In fact, the academic theoretical study of the Western classical piano from the perspective of hermeneutics will inevitably focus on the musical form of the classical piano, such as the performance style, presentation effect, and stylistic characteristics implied in the classical piano performance, which in fact requires a musical ontology analysis around the specific classical piano compositions. It is also necessary to articulate from the musical ontology when grasping the meaning and influence of hermeneutics on contemporary piano performance.

### Research's objective

To study western classical piano performance as the research object, analyzes and researches western classical piano performance from the perspective of hermeneutics, including the form of western classical music, the characteristics of piano performance and the analysis of performance.

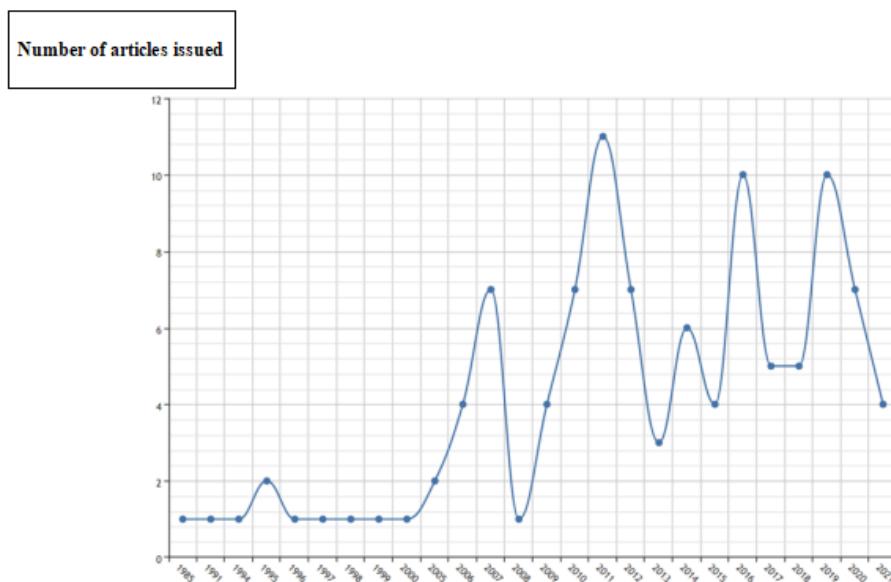
First, it is necessary to sort out the academic background and development of hermeneutics, taking time, place and figures as clues to understand the development of Western hermeneutic music philosophy, including the representative figures and main views of hermeneutics in different periods, and to make an objective evaluation of the development of hermeneutics in the context of the time. This is a prerequisite for a comprehensive and thorough study of the topic of hermeneutics, as well as the preliminary work needed to ensure the successful completion of the topic.

Second, it is necessary to interpret the music texts of the classical Western piano's classical repertoire in terms of specific compositional structure, modal tonality, harmonic color, and melodic line. From the dimension of hermeneutics, music analysis is used to restore the semantics of the score to the greatest extent possible in order to discover the author's creative intent. In order to deeply understand the emotional expression of musical works, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study with a multidimensional perspective. The hermeneutics of horizon is precisely an effective way to understand the emotional expression and spiritual connotation in a musical work, which is also the core issue to be studied in this paper. Emotional expression and spiritual interpretation in musical works is also an effective way to understand musical works.

Third, there is a need to explore the meaning and influence of contemporary piano performance, an issue that would involve, to some extent, the question of the shape of Western classical music. The significance of the existence and current influence of the Western classical school of piano performance needs to be considered from both historical and practical dimensions. In other words, we will make a reasonable interpretation of the characteristics and development of the Western classical piano repertoire, and make an objective evaluation of the development and significance of the Western classical piano performance based on the theoretical knowledge of hermeneutics, in order to restore the development of the Western classical piano performance under the perspective of hermeneutics, so as to propose practical theoretical guidance for the teaching of piano performance nowadays.

## Literature

Taking Haydn as an example, the author searched with the keyword “Haydn piano performance”, and there were 69 journals and 28 papers. As can be seen from the annual publication trends graph, research on the performance level of Haydn’s piano compositions reached a peak in 2011 with eleven papers. Since then, scholars have also gradually focused on the performance level of Haydn’s piano compositions, and more master’s theses have gradually devoted their research horizons to this area, reaching a climax of research.



**Figure 1** Search keyword "Haydn Piano Performance" on CNKI, number of articles published from 1985 to 2021

Research on the performance of Haydn’s piano compositions begins with a specific repertoire, or with a specific technique, and interprets the works involved. One of the first Chinese scholars to devote his research to this field was Luo Yaozhen, whose 1996 article *Looking for a Friend in the Ethereal Depths - An Introduction to Haydn’s Piano Sonatas and Their Recording* explains the performance of Haydn’s piano sonatas and their effects: “Haydn’s piano sonatas rely significantly less on ornament and frequently use a wide range of arpeggios, and their themes often have the free melodic ideas of folk songs, while also breaking away from attachment to German-style counterpoint techniques and abandoning the effects of the Italian style’s pursuit of flamboyant appearances, and their harmonies are based strictly on natural sounds.” As a result, the piano sonatas of Haydn are performed in a traditional musical style. In addition, there is also Hua Mao’s *An Analysis of the Application of the Sustain*

*Pedal in the Performance of the Piano* published in *Explorations in Music* in 2000, in which he proposes several principles for the use of the sustain pedal in the performance of piano compositions by Bach, Haydn and Mozart. First, “less application of sustain pedals”, as he believed that in the works of Haydn and Mozart, the clarity of the texture, syntax and playing style must be clear and organized. So it is concluded that the time duration of the pedaling of the sustain pedal should be clearly defined. And because decomposed chords occur frequently in phrases, the pedal should not be used so frequently; Secondly, in the “sustain pedals are allowed”, it should be noted that: 1) They are mainly used on long notes; 2) One pedal is used for one note according to the direction of the harmony; the same note can be repeated together, not too many notes can be mixed in one pedal; 3) The length of the pedal and its replacement should be decided according to the melody, harmony, “break” method and phrase; 4) Don’t press the sustain pedal too deep, but produce a good articulation with the non-pedal part. 5) The application of pedals must not affect the direction of the legato line in the phrase. Xiong Xu and Zhou Yang analyzes the piano styles of Haydn and Mozart in *Classical Style in Piano Performance from Haydn and Mozart* published in the sixth issue of *Art Education* in 2006, and put forward several issues that need attention in performing classical compositions. They believe that Haydn’s piano compositions are somewhat “long, brutal, and sometimes even wild”, and that his piano compositions are not concerned with singing on the piano, but are dedicated to pure expression, and there is a simple passion in his piano compositions. In the performance, the author discusses tempo, intensity, key touch, timbre, ornament and the use of pedals, but the general principle is “to enhance the coherence of the phrases and to achieve a richer and fuller sound”. They also believe that “the depth of connotation and the subtlety of appearance, as well as the unity with moderation, are the necessary measurements and characteristics of piano music performance during the Viennese Classical period”. In her article *A Few Problems to Note in Playing Haydn Piano Sonatas* published in the sixth issue of *Music World* in 2006, Wang Juan makes a few comments on the strength, appoggiatura, ornament and fingering of Haydn’s piano sonatas. First, “in most cases, changes in strength should be understood as gradual rather than sudden”; second, “the same ornamental notes should be played in the same way when they appear before and after”, and “the marking of trills, although varied, can be broadly divided into two forms, “starting from the upper note” and “starting from the natural note”, which should depend on the musical progression”; Third, Wang Juan believes that *The Complete Haydn Piano Sonatas* published by the Shanghai Education Press was more suitable for performance. She argues that “it is more important to use a reasonable and smooth fingering when

playing Haydn sonatas". In the end, she concluded that: combining rigorous technique and ease of performance, *The Complete Haydn Piano Sonatas* laid the foundation for the classical sonata by bringing out the clarity and brightness of the ancient piano tone, breaking down all the problems arising from the solidification of counterpoint and polyphonic forms of music, and bringing into full play the light and bright tonal characteristics of the ancient piano. In her *On the Performance of Haydn's <Piano Sonata in bE Major>* published in *Yuefu Xinsheng*, Chu Xiaorui discusses how to keep the style of Haydn's works as the core of the performance by combining the background of Haydn's composition and the structure of his sonatas, the spirit of the current era and Haydn's customary performance characteristics, and starting from the detailed interpretation. She analyzed the interpretation of Haydn's *Piano Sonata in <sup>b</sup>E Major* from the whole to the parts, from orchestra and timbre analysis to rhythm, each phrase and pedal, etc. Finally, the author concluded: "While paying attention to details, do not neglect to grasp the overall sense and three-dimensional sense of the work." During the performance, the music is layered and directional; in addition, it is important to pay attention to the sense of wholeness between phrases, between passages, and between movements. In the article *Characteristics of Haydn's Piano Sonatas and Key Points of Performance*, Liang Wenguang divides Haydn's piano works into three different compositional time periods, and analyzes the influence of the differences in historical context on Haydn's piano sonata compositional style according to the differences in the socio-historical background of Haydn's compositions at that time. The author explores the technique and style of Haydn's piano sonata works at different periods of time, respectively, and makes precise judgments about the basic characteristics of his piano works. Liang Wenguang also elaborates on the main points of playing Haydn's works, one of which is "to play the crisp effect of an ancient piano with a 'grainy' feel." In order to achieve this effect, the arm needs to be relaxed when playing, more use of fingers and wrist movements, the fingertips need to have a keen sense of touch, playing fast notes flowing like silk velvet, the touch of the keys should be free and even, and have a "penetrating power"; second, with regard to pedals, Liang Wenguang argues that "the most common pedals used in Haydn's piano sonatas are the rhythm pedal and the half-pedal, which should be adjusted to the actual sound of the performance"; third, in response to the problem of rhythm, "Haydn's melodic singing has been free from the constraints of tune and rhythm, everything flows naturally"; fourth, for the strength issue, "the maximum volume is only equivalent to 'mf', the lightest volume should be equivalent to 'ppp'"; fifth, with regard to the ornament, "the ornament should be played clearly and methodically"; finally, with regard to the speed of playing, he said that "there is a basic speed ration

for playing Haydn's works, i.e. four notes on one beat should not exceed 126."

### **Analysis of Representative Works of Classical Piano Music**

In the middle of the 18th century, the stylistic characteristics of Western piano performance music gradually transitioned from the Baroque music period to the Classical music period. In the 1780s, the style of Classical music was finally established, and Classical piano compositions took a leap forward. The artistic development of piano works during this period went through a number of stylistic transmutations, instrumental iterations, and formal renovations. This shows that the development of piano playing techniques and performance styles also laid a good foundation for piano playing in the Romantic music period. During this period, most musicians aspired to go to Vienna to study and exchange, and Vienna became the capital of music, and the greatest figures go to Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, who are known as the Three Vienna Masters.

The piano music of the Classical music period is of great importance in the history of piano art, and the compositional techniques used in the piano music of that time have changed greatly compared with the "ancient piano" music of the Baroque music period: (i) Changes in aesthetic interests. Works from the solemn and serious, complex and cumbersome polyphony music, changed to homophony music, music style is relaxed and pleasant, fresh and elegant. (ii) Changes in compositional style. There was a shift from polyphonic counterpoint to a dominant harmonic form, dominated by melodic lines. (iii) Changes in the curvilinear structure of the work, a feature that is more in keeping with the demands of the times in this period. (iv) Changes in keyboard instruments. The modern piano, as the main component of keyboard instruments, began to gradually replace the dominance of the ancient piano during this period.

These changes have revolutionized the art of piano playing in the history of piano art, and the art of piano playing today is not what it used to be. The emergence of the sonata marked an epochal change in the compositional genre in terms of compositional structure, and it became the predominant genre of piano music composition for classical composers. This compositional genre is based on the sonata form, emphasizing its "contrasting" characteristics, and gradually shaping the typical piano works of the Classical music period. In sonata form, the construction of the exposition is typical, in which the first and second tonal areas are contrasting in material and tonality, and then change through further progression in the development. Ultimately, the tonality of the first and second tonal themes in the recapitulation section produces a structural change of "concordance" or "regression".

The contrast between the tonality and material created by the first and second tonal themes in the exposition is characterized to highlight the contrasts in the theme. The tonal “concordance” or “regression” of the second tonal theme in the recapitulation is the fundamental principle of reflecting the tonal unity of the whole piece, thus showing a series of occurrence, development and resolution of contradictions in the sonata form, which is also a specific expression of the principle of contrast and unity in the structure of the sonata form.

Taking Haydn's piano works as an example, the author analyzes the first movement of *The Piano Sonata in E-flat Major* (Hob.xvi/52). The entire movement proceeds from a subordinate key (<sup>b</sup>A) of the original tone, although it lasts only a short time in the first section that opens the entire movement and closes over a small coda with the characteristic features of Haydn. Such a modulation can be seen in Haydn's humor in his compositional style (breaking the mold by starting the entire work on a false tonality). Then by repeating the tonic chord in various transpositions of <sup>b</sup>B major, a trill octave containing multiple F notes accompanied by a series of tonic- dominant 7th chord connection is employed in various positions. The subsequent running paragraph falls back to the tonic sustained note after a series of tonic and dominant harmony progressions. The first movement opens with the same statement as is common in the classical style, which is an echo of the opening statement and reappears in the form of a weak cadenza in the higher sections. A legato line gives the melody a singing-like fluidity while providing a dramatic contrast to the thick chords of the opening. Pay attention to the accompanying opening chords and the rest of the sung melodic passage, which are more of a rhetorical narrative in the traditional classical style than a fluid melody in the Romantic style. The diatonic legato line in the bass clef also shows features of the classical style.

One-part form structure	Exposition				
Binary form structure	First tonal area	Transition	Second tonal area	Close	Introduction
Number of bars	1-9	9-17 <sup>b</sup> E	17-20 <sup>b</sup> B	27-42 <sup>b</sup> B	43-48 g-C
Mode and tonality	<sup>b</sup> E( <sup>b</sup> A)				

One-part form structure	Development				
Binary form structure	First development Second development Third development				
Number of bars	Fourth development First tonal area				
	49-51	52-61	62-68	69-78	79-88
Mode and tonality	F	g-c-f	<sup>b</sup> A-G-c-G	b- <sup>b</sup> E	<sup>b</sup> E

One-part form structure	Recapitulation				
Binary form structure	Transition Second tonal area Close				
Number of bars	89-93	94-104	105-116		
Mode and tonality	<sup>b</sup> E	<sup>b</sup> E	<sup>b</sup> E		

**Table 1** Analysis of the First Movement of the Piano Sonata in E-flat Major (Hob. xvi/52)

The first movement consists of one hundred and sixteen bars, in “Allegromoderato” tempo, in 4/4 time, in <sup>b</sup>E major, sonata form. In the key of <sup>b</sup>E major, Haydn intermixes a distinctive atmosphere that is both solemn and austere, yet the austere atmosphere is often interspersed with an element of gentleness and playfulness. The musical style is especially tender and beautiful at each shift to a minor key. Moreover, the <sup>b</sup>E minor key itself is highly expressive and imaginative.

**Figure 2** Example 1

The exposition begins at bar 1 and ends at bar 43, and the transition, which is 2 bars long (9-10), is a melodic imitation of the higher-octave melodic passages of bars 1-2 of the first tonal area, and is a secondary performance of the theme of the exposition; the musical material is interchanged between the left and right hand in bars 11-16, a repetition of bars 6-8; the main theme is played again in the bar 17 of the second tonal area, followed by an unfolding development. The whole piece is dignified and simple in tone and witty and whimsical, with a light and joyful second theme, which is dignified and distinctive.

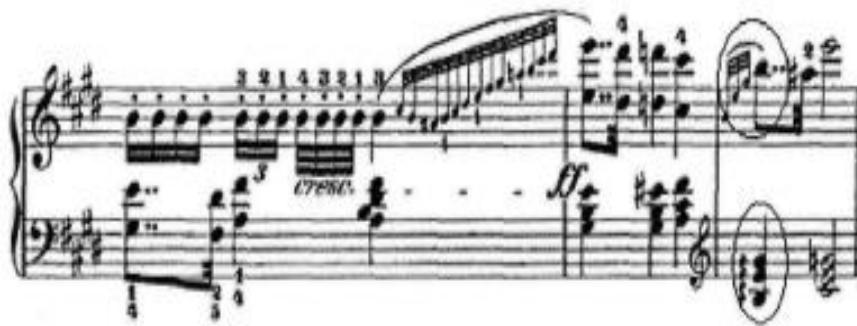
The difference in tonal shifts is evident in bars 44 through 78 in the development, where the joyful mood contrasts with the exposition. In bars 50 to 56, where the left and right hands build their own melodies for each other, the work is still in its original tonality, although it continues to transpose, and Haydn uses the counterpoint treatment of the tonic weave at this point. Haydn is unique in his handling of tonality, and the different tonalities give us different aural effects and different musical colors. The development of Haydn's first movement is a marvel with its exciting modulations, and the innovative harmonic vocabulary of his work is equally impressive. (Figure 3)



**Figure 3** Example 2

The recapitulation section is from bar 79 to bar 115, and Haydn recapitulates bars 1 to 8 of the exposition in bars 79 to 86 as is, with some expansion. The musical material used has basically appeared in the exposition and development of the work, and is then reproduced by splitting, transposing, and modulating. Haydn's use of the keyboard range was greatly expanded, and he intensified the contrast between the high and low registers, as well as mimicking a variety of instruments with the timbre of the piano, which allowed for the greatest level of symphonic richness in piano music. In this movement we can hear the colors of the violin and cello, as well as the clarinet or horn, and the distinctive sound of the kithara. For example, the musical fragment

in example 3, where the right hand part is ornamented with decomposed arpeggios, and the left hand part is ornamented with arpeggio cadenzas, produces tones that mimic those of the Austrian kithara. (Figure 4.)



**Figure 4** Example 3

The sonata achieves a more colorful sound by expanding the range of the keyboard, but of course this richer, broader sound may in part be related to the sturdy mechanics of the English piano. The dotted rhythm creates a solemn and joyful effect in the development, and is also found in those parts of the passage that are full of tension and drama, and the triplets are used more freely and flexibly, often in conjunction with ornamental rhythms. This rhythmic diversity can be clearly reflected in this movement.

The first movement is large and musically rich, occupying one hundred and sixteen bars and requiring a playing time of about eight minutes and forty seconds. The movement has an imposing and spirited exposition; a complex and dramatic development; and a cleverly conceived and emotionally uplifting recapitulation. It leaves people with a feeling of hearty and lingering pleasure after enjoying it. The music is elegant, deep and majestic, which is the charm of Haydn's piano music works.

### Exploration of Classical Piano Playing Techniques

The use of homophony as the main content is a distinctive feature of the style of piano works in the Classical music period, and it was the creation of this style that led to the establishment of the structural system of the work as well as the compositional architecture of sonority. The prominent ideological core of the piano works of the classical music period is – humanism. There are many musicians who have continued this idea of composing and performing piano works, such as the representative musicians of this period: Beethoven, Mozart, etc., who are all musicians with a strong humanist style. The musical characteristics of this period also had a

profound influence on later generations of musicians in terms of composition. They create musical works that focus on the use of the acoustics of the piano itself and effectively utilize the basic technical means of performance, combining the two. The main reason for the division between pre- and post-Classicism is that the two styles of piano playing techniques are very different. By this period, piano playing had made great progress in terms of technique, which was different from that of the previous Baroque period. The piano music of the Classical period, with its clear language, rigorous structure, and varied melodies, began to gradually free itself from the constraints of religion, creating musical works that marked the Classical style. In performing these works, the performer is required to utilize appropriate performance techniques, emphasizing the predominance of finger-picking techniques, a hallmark of pre-Classical music. The melodic line must be controlled accurately and smoothly in order to play the beautiful and dynamic melodic line required by classicism; ensure that the fingers are sensitive and light, and the arm strength must be used properly in order to achieve the elegant and peaceful effect of the piece. The performance of piano works in the post-Classical style extends the range of sound, and in order to optimize the acoustics, it is even more necessary to use the arm power wisely to produce a clear shift in timbre.

### **1. Touch techniques**

There are four main types of touch in piano playing: legato, non-legato, staccato, and mezzo-staccato. In playing classical works, it is important to make clear how the keys are touched: (i) When playing “legato” phrases, it is necessary to emphasize the coherence of the phrases and the flow of the phrases, and at this time it is very important to maintain the bond between the fingers and the keys, and try to leave no gaps between the fingers and the keys. This requires that the performer's fingers not be lifted too high off the keys as they play; When playing legato, it is important to keep adequate duration for each note, especially when playing legato passages in succession. During the playing of legato passages, be sure to keep your wrist flexible and pay attention to the flow of musical breath. In addition, the articulation between two homophones must be highly “glued” together in the actual legato process. (ii) In the case of “non-legato” phrases, the fingers must be played with corresponding techniques, but, unlike in contrapuntal phrases, they do not need to be pressed firmly against the keyboard. (iii) It is desirable to play the “staccato” notes of a classical work at one-half the original duration of the note. This is mainly due to the fact that classicism is concerned with tonal control when playing staccato, and therefore the duration of the staccato should not be played too short. (iv) Touch method - “staccato”: For most beginner piano performers, it is actually a very serious

misconception that once they encounter staccato notes, they play the duration of the notes very short and the sound sounds extraordinarily sharp. In fact, when playing staccato notes, the fingers touch the keys before they sound. In fact, mezzo-staccato is not staccato, mezzo-staccato is somehow more similar to legato, so in the process of playing, you must express the rhythm and rhyme that the music needs to achieve through the driving of the wrist.

In addition, if a performer uses different touch techniques to play the same piano piece, the style of the piece will be different, and may even make the whole piece a vastly different aural effect. In the process of piano playing, the acoustics of the performance are closely related to the mood of the performer and the touch techniques. If the performer is in a calm mood at the time, and is playing with a lighter intensity, it will give the audience a softer, more pleasant acoustic effect; If the performer wants to express a more exciting musical mood, the keys are usually touched more vigorously and the speed of the downstroke is faster. It can be seen that the performer and the performance effect are closely linked, different touch techniques will make the piano performance present different acoustic effects, which can make the performer emotionally resonate with the listener, and with the change of the key touching method, the listener's emotion will also be changed.

## 2. Ornament techniques

In the course of playing, teaching, and instructing, we are exposed to many questions about changes in playing technique over time, and among these questions, ornaments also have a place. Although ornaments change subtly, it does have some effect on the playing. In the Baroque period, different composers had their own uniquely required techniques and methods for playing ornaments, and they simply improvised on top of their standardized performances. The ornaments vary according to the musical characteristics of the piece, such as emotion, tempo, intensity, and compositional structure. The musical expression of the Classical period is much more complex in terms of intuition and sensuality than that of the Baroque period, and the works present a much richer connotation. Classical music demanded a balance between reason and sensibility, and focused on accurate expression; therefore, notation during the Classical period was quite different from that of the Baroque period, requiring strict, standardized notation of the manner in which the ornaments were to be played on the clef. The precision of notation was an important feature of this period. Although the method of notation at that time was slightly inferior to the modern standardized notation, it was still a “leap” for the beginning of standardized notation. The music of the Classical period developed from the music of the Baroque period. But they are different: the music of the Baroque period deals less with

technique, and instead takes the most direct and natural approach. The music of the Classical period is more developed in this respect: the music of the Classical period underwent a deepening of composition as well as of technique; the melodies composed were more complex; In addition, the performer is required to play a richer timbre, and as a result, the musical work presented becomes more vivid and fuller in its aural effect.

The music of the Classical period was more contained, and music composition was concerned with balance. The balance between reason and emotion was an important feature of this period. For this reason, the performance of ornament in the Classical period would be marked on the score with a clear technique, so that the composer's intended meaning would be played unaltered by the performer. Moreover, ornaments become more important as they do not need to appear as supplements to the acoustic vacancies, but as extensions of the acoustic.

In classical piano works, there are four main types of ornaments, including: trill, mordent, inverted mordent, and inverted turn. Sometimes it is necessary to play from the original note of the trill in order to make the phrase connecting the melodic lines more coherent and complete. Individual composers have their own different opinions on what note the trill ends on. The performer then needs to make a judgment based on his or her previous experience and artistic appreciation as to whether or not to include a coda treatment at the ending note of the trill, or just end it. In addition, in the piano novices tend to play the duration of the ornament too short, which is also one of the misunderstandings of novice learners, so in the actual playing and teaching process, we should pay more attention to this aspect.

### **3. Pedal technique**

The piano pedal came later than the piano. The exact name of the piano we usually play is “Modern Piano”, and before that there were similar keyboard instruments, such as the harpsichord and ancient piano. The earliest pianos were very different from modern pianos, when damper was controlled by hand pins. It wasn't until 1815 that mechanical pedals were born and popularized among the masses thanks to the efforts of Brodman Jr. The use of pedals was a slow process in the development of Western music, and it can be said that the classical period was an important stage in the origin of pedals, and pedals gradually captured the hearts of many composers. Therefore, the method of using the pedal needs to take into account musical period, musical style, composer's compositional background and other factors. When the performer needs to use the pedal to present a richer musical character, the use of the pedal needs to be adjusted according to the specific piece. Pedal is one of the important and inseparable elements in piano playing, which can visually influence

the effect and style of piano playing.

The piano has three pedals, and they also have their own different responsibilities in playing. The first is the right pedal, which is called the “sustain pedal” or “strong pedal”, and its main function is to prolong the duration of the string vibration in order to prolong the duration of the note that needs to be sustained audibly. The principle of the “sustain pedal” is that after the performer depresses the sustain plate, the piano's internal damper no longer acts on the strings and hammers, so that the strings can continue to vibrate in order to prolong the duration of the notes. The sustain pedal is used primarily to add fluidity and coherence to the piece, making for a richer musical effect. The leftmost pedal is also known as the soft pedal. When the performer depresses the soft pedal, the distance between the strings and the hammers is shortened, and the action of the hammers on the strings naturally diminishes, as does the sound produced by the strings. As a result, the piano will emit a lighter volume at this point than it did before the pedal was depressed. The use of soft pedals produces a lower volume and softer tone, and is generally used in performance on slow movements. The last is the sostenuto pedal, called the “selector” pedal, or the “extension” pedal, which exists only in grand pianos. In the grand piano, the sostenuto pedal is used to continue the sound of a tone that is being played, so that its duration can be continued, and is used to continue the melodic direction of a particular part in the performance.

In the early and middle part of the Classical music period, composers began to use sustaining pedals in their scores, but not very often. From the works of classical composers such as Mozart and Haydn, it can be seen that they were pursuing “clarity of tone” and “coherence of phrases”. In classical compositions, sustain pedal is used only in a very small part of the musical line in order to achieve coherence and continuity in certain short sections. In the second movement, the usual slow movement, pedals are used more often, and sustain pedal is used to bring out the soothing atmosphere and make the piece more expressive. It wasn't until later in the Classical musical period that Beethoven used the sustain pedal more often in his compositions in order to shape the musical image he was striving for.

#### **4. Scale and arpeggio techniques**

Scales and arpeggios are the most common performance techniques in piano works of the classical period, and their metronomic requirements are quite demanding. The playing of scales and arpeggios is one of the most crucial parts when playing piano music from the classical music period. As Beethoven's favorite disciple, Carl Czerny, the famous Austrian composer and piano pedagogue, categorized the performance techniques contained in the piano works of the Classical period in his works in a very

fine way-*Czerny Exercises 599, Czerny Exercises 849, Czerny Exercises 299, Czerny Exercises 740*. The goals of these exercises in the repertoire are aimed at the key points and difficulties of classical music playing techniques. Until today, the exercises composed by Czerny have become mandatory for scholars who are beginning to learn the piano, as well as the key points in piano music textbooks. After comparing and analyzing Cherny's exercises, it is easy to find that the scales and arpeggios appear most frequently, so the importance of scales and arpeggios can be seen.

Scales are composed of whole tones, half tones, etc. arranged in a regular order, and can be roughly divided into several basic types: e.g., octave, third, and sixth. Typically, the scale training range is based on 24 “major” and “minor” modes, spanning 4 octaves. Scales in different keys are labeled with their fixed fingerings, and if a fingering error occurs at a certain stage, it will directly affect the overall practice of the piece, and in serious cases, the melody may be disordered. Therefore, improving the consistency and integrity of fingering is especially important in scale training. The importance of hand shape and rhythm is often overlooked in normal training. It is not difficult to find a number of striking and unattainable speed exercises in Czerny's extensive repertoire of exercises. This suggests that the ability to play at high speeds was also very important when playing piano works from the Classical music period.

The arpeggio has the same range as the scale, which is 4 octaves. Although arpeggios also have a fixed fingering in the performance process, it is clear that the arpeggio fingering system is much simpler than the scale fingering, and the training is based on the mastery of chord decomposition techniques. In the actual training process, the practitioner needs to focus on the ability to control the keys and the distance training between the fingers in order to improve the coherence of the piece and the integrity of the performance. Independence and dexterity of the fingers are essential for piano playing and have a direct impact on the performance of piano works.

In the performance of piano works, “scales” and “arpeggios” are not only an important cornerstone of the piano playing technique in the classical music period, but also the core of the whole piano music works. The first step in learning and playing these classical piano works is to have an understanding of the work, so that you can find inspiration in your technique and get inspired. Therefore, it takes a long period of uninterrupted study and accumulation to play piano pieces well.

## Conclusion

Western classical piano performance is an extremely important part of contemporary piano performance, and this paper takes it as a research object to

analyze and study the Western classical piano research from the perspective of hermeneutics. Theoretical research is to better guide practice, this paper focuses on the research is not in the actual teaching, performance, but it foreshadows the possibility of subsequent closer research, so that the research does not stop at the text level on paper. In summary, the author summarizes the main research contributions of this paper as follows:

(a) Through extensive reading of the literature and its collection and integration, the author has a current knowledge of the content of the selected topic, so that it can be closer to the actual “take the essence, remove the dross”. This paper analyzes Western classical piano performance from the perspective of hermeneutics, and the comprehensive and all-encompassing nature of this research is fully demonstrated by studying the results of previous research.

(b) Combined with the current status of teaching and performance, it discusses and analyzes what practical problems should be solved, what policies should be formulated, and what necessary measures should be taken for the future development of Western classical piano performance, which reflects the forward-looking and prophetic nature of this paper.

(c) The data used in this study are “first-hand” information obtained through fieldwork by the author. The current role and significance of Western classical piano performance is explored to ensure that this study has practical and practical implications for future research and piano performance.

In conclusion, this paper addresses the study of Western classical piano performance under the perspective of hermeneutics, which has certain contributions to make both in the analysis of the theoretical level of musicality and in the future feasibility of teaching and performance practice.

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